

Equipping God's People to Evangelize

What makes a church effective in the spread of the gospel? Is it methods or programs they create to lure non-believers? Is it a charismatic personality in the pulpit or a modern facility? No, biblical evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel, the good news that Jesus Christ was crucified for our sins, buried, and raised on the third day (1 Cor. 15:3-4). This process starts with teaching "all that Christ commanded" (Matt. 28:18-20) to those the Lord has placed in our trust.

But the fact is many Christians aren't receiving the attention they need to be effective in sharing the gospel. They are left in doubt, fearing the idea of witnessing to the non-believers (Acts 1:8). Why has this happened? How has the Church (at large) gotten off course? This can be traced largely to the adoption (by many churches) of modern methods which put too much emphasis on catering to the masses, sacrificing intense discipleship. This was never part of God's design for equipping of His Church to do world evangelization.

We need to focus on the depth of the believer (Col. 1:28) and leave the breadth of the church up to God (Matt.16:18). This is accomplished when we commit to discipling God's people, moving them into a deep understanding of the biblical gospel message. It's important to note that the equipping process involves

much more than Sunday morning sermons. We must not overlook the importance of small group studies or intimate mentorship. Understanding the presentation, God's people will have tremendous confidence as they obediently engage the lost world.

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These efforts have been paying off for our church plant effort in Oregon, Antioch Bible Church. We landed a song leader, a key family is continuing with the plant, non-believers have been invited to church and we found a spot to meet for a couple of weeks on Sunday mornings. It was in a bowling alley meeting room.

All these blessings brought encouragement to the group, but we still needed a permanent meeting location. As a result, I went to look for a loca-

tion. I wasn't having much success and decided to go over to a private school in a central location with lots of traffic. In my strong opinion, there wasn't a better spot for a church plant to meet in our county. It had long been my dream location as it would make a great home for our church plant.

I hadn't called or stopped by because I knew that another church had been renting from them for a number of years, but thought I had nothing to lose. I went in and asked about the availability of the building, expecting that the other church would still be meeting there. They said the church was moving out and the next Sunday would be their last. WOW!!! Interesting timing.

So, it looks like our church plant will be moving. And as the church grows, we'll have access to many classrooms and the gym for services. It was only a couple of weeks earlier we thought we were dead in the water. Just another reminder that God is sovereign. What a wonderful God we serve.

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