

Taking to the Streets - Responding to Jesus Commands

by Bill Scheidler

God loves the city. In the Gospels we see Jesus weeping over the city of Jerusalem. Why? Does He really care that much about an actual city? Does God love one city more than another city? No! God loves the city, because the city is where people are to be found.

God has no regard for the buildings and institutions of man. He is not impressed with our great structures and towers. God cares and has always cared for people!

That is why God is so concerned about us reaching our cities. He wants us to reach the people in those cities. He wants us to touch those for whom He died. He wants us to fulfill His Father's heart cry and reap a significant harvest from each city.

One of the things that has hindered us to some extent has been our methodology. We all believe that we are to reach our city, but how are we to do it?

Unfortunately, many times we are actually following an Old Testament method rather than the New Testament method in our efforts. In the Old Testament, because God's people did not have the power of the Holy Spirit working within them and they did not have all of the internal benefits of being born again, God set them up as an isolated community governed by the laws of God. They were a distinct people with a distinct culture and a distinct geographical location.

God's method in the Old Testament was to establish a model community under His leadership. It would be a society that would model God's nature and God's law. Then He would invite those who wanted to know God and His ways to "Come, behold the works of the Lord" (Psalm 46:8). Just like the Queen of Sheba came to see, the world was invited to come and see the goodness of God.

In the New Testament, however, God's method is totally opposite. The difference has to do with the fact on the basis of Christ's resurrection and ascension, we have the Holy Spirit within us and upon us to "be witnesses" of Jesus.

Now the command is to "Go". The church is not to be a perfect society isolated from the lost that people are invited to visit, the church is to go to where the people are located. Our assembling together is for encouragement and equipment but our task is to go and take our gospel to the streets!

This was the method of Jesus that He taught to the disciples, to the seventy and later to the entire Church. They were to "go". And as they went, they were to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, heal the sick, cast out devils, cleanse the lepers, and raise the dead (Matt. 10:6-8).

This is the challenge to the Church today. Get out of your isolated boxes and take it to the streets! Get the message out to where the people are.

Some churches are getting a hold of this message. They are looking for opportunities to get the Gospel out to where the lost are to be found. Here are some things that are happening:

PRAYER WALKS

People are walking the streets praying for people, businesses, neighborhoods and leaders of the city. They are also doing battle against principalities and powers in those areas.

OUTDOOR WORSHIP SERVICES

Several churches including South Umpqua Christian Center has taken their Sunday evening service into the parks. They usually begin with a potluck/picnic; have a live band and a very open worship service.

PARK MINISTRY

Other churches have taken the equivalent of a VBS program into public parks in their cities. Glad Tiding in Yuba City, California and Bible Temple in Portland both have a ministry called "Stitches" that takes an evangelistic children's program to parks.

BUSINESS PRAYER LUNCHESES

Some churches are organizing prayer lunches in the central business districts or their cities. These give opportunity for business people to be ministered to on "their turf".

CITY CENTER PRAYER MEETINGS

Almost every city has a central gathering place or park. Some churches are organizing prayer times for their people to meet for prayer right in the middle of everything. A group of business people at Bible Temple rented a room in the temporary City Hall and is using it for a prayer room to saturate the city fathers with prayer.

The possibilities are endless. God wants us to get creative and take that which he has given to us and take it to the streets. Just as the early apostles who were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost let the experience that they had flow out of the upper room and into the street, God wants us to take the power and gifts of the Spirit to the streets. That is what the Gifts of the Spirit were made for, and that is what we were made for.