

A License to Evangelize

Who will bring the lost to Christ? Those who have a license to evangelize. So how do we get such a license?

Two Christians want to bring people to the Lord. Which do you think will be more successful?

Jim lives in a modest neighborhood with his wife, 10-year-old son and 6-year-old daughter. Jim's yard is not the best kept in the neighborhood. In fact, some neighbors think it is an embarrassment. He trims his shrubs about once a summer. A gutter has been hanging loose on the corner of the house for over a year. He has a running battle with his neighbor over who is supposed to keep the hedge trimmed between them. Neighbors have also seen him in shouting matches with his son in the yard on several occasions. When Bob (three doors down) came down with cancer, everyone on the street agreed to help with their yard work and transportation for their kids. But every time Jim is called on he is too busy. Jim is always borrowing tools from his neighbors to work on his car but he never returns them until asked.

Tim and Beth live in a similar neighborhood. He has always felt he had a responsibility to his neighbors. That included keeping his property looking nice and clean. He can't afford to do a lot to the house as they are raising 3 children including two teenagers. But they all work together to keep the place looking nice. He has a reputation in the neighborhood for dependability. When a neighbor's wife was in a car accident, they went to the hospital as soon as they heard and offered to help with the children. They took food over regularly when she came home. Beth even cleaned her house a couple of times and Tim mowed their yard. All the neighbors know Tim and Beth and their well behaved children and say they could not ask for better neighbors.

Tim and Jim both attend the Highway 99 Church of Christ. They are planning a special Sunday to invite neighbors to services. Both Tim and Jim invite all their neighbors. Whom do you think had the most success?

If we want people to hear us when we teach the gospel we usually are going to have to earn that right. That is what we learn from scripture. Nehemiah was a great leader among his people in Jerusalem. He rebuked them strongly on more than one occasion. In Nehemiah chapter five he condemned some Jews for charging their brethren interest and even taking their children as bondservants to pay debts. Nehemiah demanded this be stopped and that property and children be restored immediately. The people listened and obeyed. Why? He had earned the right.

Nehemiah 5:14-16 - "Moreover, from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, until his thirty-second year-- twelve years-- neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor. But the earlier governors-- those preceding me-- placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels of silver from them in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it

over the people. But out of reverence for God I did not act like that. Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall. All my men were assembled there for the work; we did not acquire any land.” Nehemiah had shown the people that he feared and served God first and would not take advantage of them. His life was seen by all to be exemplary. They knew he was a man of character and he cared for them. That caused them to listen when he spoke.

We have to earn the right to evangelize our neighbors and friends. If our first thought in evangelizing our neighbors begins one week before that special “Visitor Sunday” when you see some advertising flyers out in the foyer, we will never be successful in bringing others to Christ. Those in the world who know us must first see our godliness and our compassion. *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.* (Matt. 5:16) We must first be a good neighbor and a true friend. Then we can begin to talk to them about the gospel.

Evangelism is not just what you do but what you are. The best soul winners I have ever known are those who are involved in the lives of neighbors and friends. They work to be in the world but not of the world. They want to be salt and light and they know that means their influence grows with others as they touch the lives of the “publicans and sinners” around them. Like the good Samaritan they want to prove they are a good neighbor.

Churches that are successful in evangelism are full of people who understand this principle. They realize success is not dependent upon some new evangelism scheme. It is dependent first upon every member being committed to the Lord and His Word, to one another, and to their neighbors. They want to be a power for good in the world. Churches that reach the lost have lots of members with that mindset. People of the world more readily accept the authority of Christ when they have seen it at work in the lives of others. And as our world becomes more and more secular, the Godly life will shine brighter than ever.

Every Christian can bring someone to the Lord. But we must remember it begins long before you open the Bible to study with someone. It starts when those around you begin reading your life on a daily basis. Let them really see Christ in you. Let them see you reaching out to them in many ways. Be a Tim and not a Jim. Then you will have earned a “license to evangelize” and you will begin to win souls.

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