

OVERCOMING BARRIERS . . . SO THAT WE CAN REACH OTHERS (Part Two)

We talk a lot in our churches about loving others. But our lack of love toward the lost around us is a tremendous barrier to our being involved in reaching others. And possibly that lack is more a lack of our love to God. If we loved the Lord Jesus Christ, the Heavenly Father, the ministering Holy Spirit as we ought, do you think then we would love what HE loves? As Christ paid His all, so you think we would become more sacrificial and more loving toward the unsaved and be more burdened to understand them, and to truly love them where they are? I think so!

NATURAL BARRIERS: (from within)

There are many natural barriers that are constructed by the church, by the saved. Some create barriers by their bad breath when calling on the unsaved, or they use poor grammar, or by adding church membership to the message of salvation, or a dozen other things.

There is the barrier of our FEAR: (I Cor. 2:3) Paul wrote about his fears. Paul had a problem with fear. We would not expect that would impact Paul's life. In his first letter fear was an apparent barrier to Paul. He requested the Ephesians that they would pray for him that he might preach the gospel without fear. (Eph. 6:19) God encouraged Paul... because of his fear. (Acts 18:9,10) God has not given us the spirit of fear. (II Tim. 1:7; Acts 4:23-33) Fear is a very real barrier to evangelism.

In Acts 4:29-33 we read that the early church prayed for **boldness to witness!** It is God's will to give us boldness and ability to share the gospel to those we know the best. In I Peter 3:15-16 we are commanded to "*sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts, being always ready to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give an account for the hope that is in us....*"

Christians are often reluctant to witness because they fear rejection. We naturally desire to feel accept and liked, and this is a basic human need. The very possibility of rejection strikes fear in the lives of many Christians. Or we fear we won't succeed, and the possibility of failure, especially in serving God and seeking to win a lost loved one becomes a barrier. Since they are lost, undone, etc., can we cause them to be more lost than they already are? Some have stated to me they are afraid they will say the wrong thing... but can we make them more lost by what we say?

There is the barrier of SEPARATION that comes through linguistic, ethnic or cultural barriers. There are diverse speaking groups in our large cities. There are many cultural barriers and language barriers throughout the United States.

There is the barrier of BROKEN relationships: First, we may have **broken relationships** with those close to us. Ruptured relationships **hinder** the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the life of the lost person. (Gal. 5:13-17, 22-26) Our witness is neutralized. Our words **are rejected** because of the broken relationship. (Gal. 6:7-10) Hurts **close the hearts** of those who we should influence for Christ. We must **correct** those hurts, make restitution, ask for forgiveness, and give forgiveness. (Col. 3:8-14)

The issue is: Do we love the Lord and obey Him? (Read and study John 14:21.) We must agree with what God has told us to do! When we **obey HIM**, then He becomes very real. The Lord becomes conspicuous or real in our lives if we obey Him. He will reveal Himself to us! (John 14:21-23)

Christ wants to be so real you feel His presence and you can't ignore Him or make a decision without Him. **He will give boldness!** Maybe we have never reached out in love to people in our *circles of influence* because we **have never truly known HIM who is LOVE.**

Do YOU truly know Christ as Savior Lord? (Jh 5:11-13) Has He made you His child? (Jh 1:12-13; 3:1-7) Do you have the assurance of being His? (Jh 6:37; 5:24) Do you have a *new life in Christ?* (II Cor. 5:17-20) By virtue of having Christ, the *love of God is shed abroad in your heart!* Is that true of you? (Rom. 5:5)

BARRIERS ARE TO BE OVERCOME:

In spite of barriers. . . we are to share the gospel. . . The Good News! There are some reasons why we fail to take the message to those we know:

What is the great message? (II Cor. 5:18-20) It is the *good news*, used 75 times in the New Testament. It is the Greek, word, *euangelion*, meaning *good sound*, the message of God's good news about man's redemption. It should be only natural that we share the most *blessed news... the gospel* with those who are close to us with whom we have developed a relationship.

Often Christians are artificial, and hypocritical. We carry the good news out to Person X somewhere, but we will not carry it to the ones around us whom we know well. We say -- "*It is too hard to witness to those I really know.*" If that is true, something is wrong with those relationships. In reality our love and concern is greater for ourselves that it is for those who are closest to us.

We forget that we are to be ambassadors, taking the gospel to all who God puts in our path. (II Cor. 5:17-21) An ambassador is one who *represents someone* other than himself at the court of another. We are left here on planet earth (after salvation) that we might present the Lord to those who do not know Him. Wherever we go -- teaching school, running a business, buying groceries, at the office, at the factory, on the street -- *we are to represent Christ and the gospel message.*

He has given to us the ministry of reconciliation! We feel we must wait until we are ready, therefore we never get around to ministering to our *circles of influence.* (II Pet. 3:15) We must be involved NOW! God takes you, uses you NOW, where you are, based on your availability! It is not a ministry sometime later -- don't waste a life, it is now. (II Cor. 6:2; Heb. 2:1-3) Allow the Holy Spirit to fill your life, to control you. *He will use your personality as He produces Christ's character in your personality.* (Eph. 5:18; Rom. 14:17) He will set you free to speak freely, openly, joyfully about Christ.

CONSIDER:

Do you want Christ to be real in your life?

1. Then **obey** Him. (Jh 14:21; Matt. 28:18-20)
2. You must say, *“Father, I do not care what it costs. I do not care to do what I want. I will obey your will, your Word.”*
3. ***The criteria is God’s criteria*** -- to *“make disciples of all nations.”*
Consider the meaning of Matthew 28:18-20.
4. **You and I are responsible for everyone in our *circles of influence*.** Not the whole world, but our world!
5. ***God’s grace is sufficient, we just must be available!***

Do you want true, biblical fulfillment in your life?

1. It comes when HE is in control in your life!
2. It is real when you are right with others with no broken relationships. (Matt. 6:14-15)
3. We have fulfillment when pride is put away and we sweetly, obediently reach out in Christ’s love.
4. What makes you happy? What excites you, what satisfies you? When you build loving relationships and reach those for Christ?
5. Ever been around someone who really loves you and cares for you? ***That satisfies -- then go and do likewise!!***
6. Come to the Cross, allow the Lord to meet the need of your heart, your spirit, your inner man! Let Him FILL YOU with His presence!
(Jh 14:13-21, 27; 15:9-17; 16:13-15, 23-24, 33)

“Father, as we reach out to our circles of influence, show us the barriers in our lives that need to be overcome. Help us to be obedient to you and to take comfort in your presence and love.”