



**GROW
IN
GRACE**
NEWSLETTER

Volume 44, No.13, March 28 , 2017 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter **is a weekly Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church; and is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

LIVING and SPREADING the Gospel in our own LOCAL MISSION FIELD!

"... ANDREW... first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. **And he brought him to Jesus...** The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me... **PHILIP findeth Nathaniel**, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:40b-45)

Genuine Christianity is all about RELATIONSHIPS! The primary relationship is, of course, a personal, saving relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. **The next vital relationship** is that of fellowship in the body of Christ— specifically of being together **in a local church** with other brothers and sisters in Christ. (Acts 1 & 2; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4)

It is primarily in a local church CONTEXT that we are able to carry out the various 'one to another' ***this-is-what-love-looks-like ministries*** which are stated over 50 times in the Epistles. In the Christian Home and in the local assembly of saints in Christ, Christ is our exalted HEAD and we are 'serving members' in His Body of which He is the Head;

and in His Body we are to live in submission one to another in the fear of God. (Eph. 5:21)

AS AN OVERFLOW of these primary relationships we are called and motivated by the indwelling compelling of the Holy Spirit to move out into our world to advance the cause of Christ. **THE NEW TESTAMENT reveals** the Gospel advancing along lines of relationships: (1) **Andrew** went to Peter; (2) **Philip**, to Nathaniel; (3) **the woman at the well**, back to her city. (4) **Cornelius** went to his household; (5) **the Philippian jailer**, to his household; (6) **the demonic of the Gadarenes** now sitting at the feet of Jesus, fully clothed and in his right mind was told by Jesus to go back to his home people and tell them what great things the LORD had done for him! **O my, what a simple but powerful strategy!**

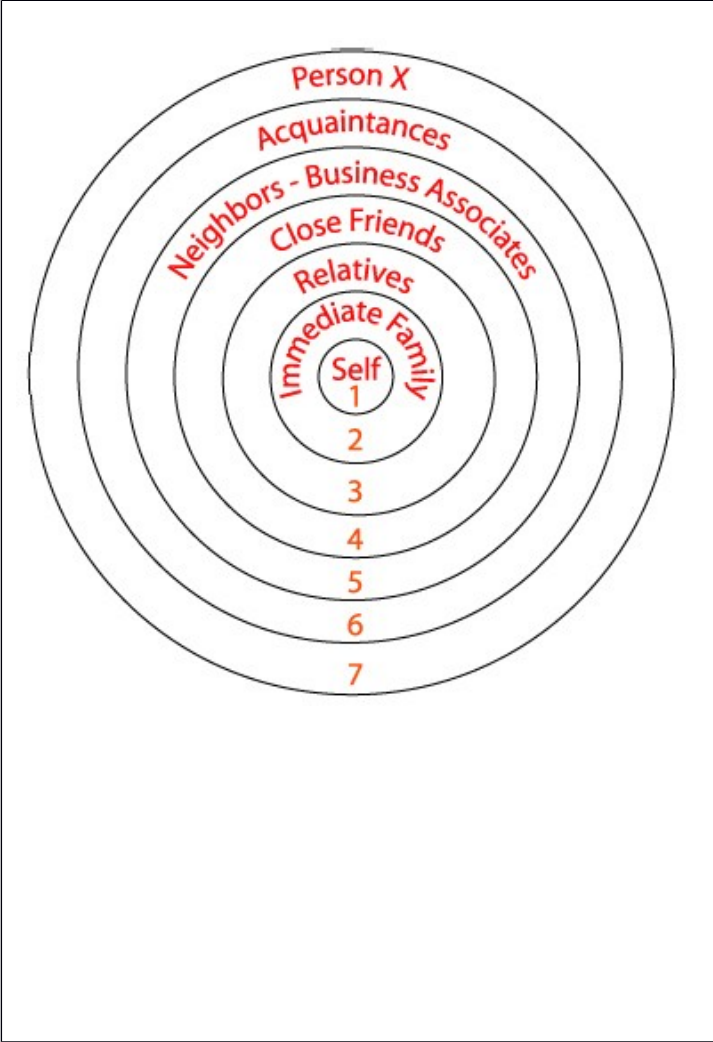
THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH DID NOT have a mere ‘Visitation night’— THEY HAD LIFESTYLE TRANSFORMATION! Indeed, if something good or bad happens to us— among the first people we want to tell is family, friends, and close associates. It is normal for life to unfold in the context of relationships— and no one has to BEG US TO DO IT! Therefore, look at the circles below. These are called **Concentric Circles**, because all of the circles are related to and have a specific connection to the first circle. **These Concentric Circles illustrate the normal experience of relationships.**

Jesus told the disciples, ***“You shall be my witnesses in [1] Jerusalem; [2] Judea; [3] Samaria and [4] to the uttermost part of the earth.”*** WITNESSES— that is, **we are to** demonstrate by our lives real evidence of Christ in our lives **to the people in our world, starting with those closest to home!**

This is the ‘music’ of the gospel which makes the gospel tracts, sermons, Bible Studies, etc., all the more believable!

REALITY: The Gospel is spread along lines of relationships. If we ‘close our curtains’ and live to ourselves **and/or** if our relationships are ruptured and/or if our lives are unholy— then, it is very difficult for the Gospel to advance.

Thus, all across the land, churches, (lacking the true ‘Gospel Music’ of flowing love, joy, peace, kindness, forgiveness and holiness) **dumb down to trying to advance the gospel by means of various forms of entertainment.**



REALITY: All too often we have hidden ruptured and/or strained relationships in our Bible believing Christian churches and homes that hinder the spread of the Gospel of Christ!

This is one reason that we find it easy to **jump past** family, relatives, friends, neighbors, business or work associates, and even acquaintances and go to Person X to evangelize!

We run out to “Person X” and we give them the gospel or a tract; and then, we run back to the safety of our home or church! (Rabbit holes— places where we are isolated from the world!)

Person X may be in the high crime streets of a big city or in a third world, poverty stricken country, or in a rescue mission or jail— **we go to them!** We evangelize. We come home. We tell others about our efforts. We go back to our business, job, home, church and/or daily routines; and every so often we repeat the cycle. Others may commend us for being willing to ‘go to the streets’ or to a foreign land and minister for a few hours, days or even weeks.

Now there is no doubt about it: Person X needs the Gospel and they are a part of the world that we are called upon to evangelize!

Ministry to Person X is valid and needed!

BUT WHY is it that all too often we do not GO TO THE FOLKS IN CIRCLES 2-6?

Well, it could be because they know us— they know our salty language, lustful looks, greedy grasping, anger, business deceit, gossip, etc. They see how we are at work or at school or in our home. We might need to, first of all, ask for their forgiveness or give forgiveness. (Which if that is what we need to do— just do it! That is powerful witnessing!)

ALSO, with Person X, we don't have to deal with our 'hang-ups' and we can 'love them and leave them!' We make a 'quick trip' to a third world country, (Or even stay 45 days as I have!), but then we come home. Again, yes, there is need and a place for such endeavors. **But frankly, such labors** are usually simple and easy as compared to witnessing to those in circles 2-6!

With 'Third World' type missions/evangelism right in our own town, or with outreach efforts toward neighbors just down the street— it's different and far more difficult! Why? How so?

Again, the folks around us KNOW us— warts and all! BUT ALSO, with ministry in Circles 2-6, it's week after week, month after month, year after year. Ministering to those in Circles 2-6 is much like the career missionary: we are there for the long haul— planting, watering, praying, and waiting for the LORD to give the increase! We can't leave them.

We can't just do Sunday School, or ministry to a neighbor, or to a co-worker once or twice a year. Rather, we minister to them week after week and year after year— or at least maintain availability to minister, being alert for the next opportunity! We can't just 'walk by on the other side' nor can we 'love them and leave them'— leaving the hard work of 'on-going follow up' ministries to others. **To folks in our Circles 2-6, we are THEIR career missionaries or their full-time Rescue Mission Ministers, etc. Thus, we have to stop and give sacrificially of ourselves and our time.**

HAVE WE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED THIS— IF we minister to someone in our local Jail, **are we not also obligated** to pray, think, plan, prepare as to how we can continue to minister when they get out? **IF** we find an ‘open door’ with a family, with an individual— **do we not have to be prepared** to follow-up week after week and even beyond? **IF** at Church services, we discover a need in someone or that a visitor is present— **doesn’t the S.S. class or you have** opportunity/responsibility for follow-up ministry? **OR... AM I** content to just do ‘rabbit-hole’ evangelism... **or to do no evangelism or other outreach ministries?**

Over the years a good number of dear ones have told me that they felt **it was so much easier to minister the Gospel in this particular foreign land or that one.** “God is obviously at work in such and such place or nation— that’s where I want to be!” In contrast, they proclaim that gospel ministry can be so hard here in America. Besides, Americans have already heard the gospel.

But here is some larger reality: If we were the actual ones living in and ministering in that ‘third world’ country or in a big city Rescue Mission every day, 365 days a year and year after year— we would not think it easy and we would see and experience their intense spiritual warfare!

Years back I spent 2 weeks in India, and then one month; but it was not until I had later spent 45 days in India that I began to feel just a little of what it would be like to be called to minister in India 365 days a year! **All of those folks were in my Person X! But all who were Person X to me— those same folk were the people of Circles 2-6 to the Indian pastors and gospel workers— 365 days a year.**

On three different occasions I, along with a team, walked the streets of major cities in India all day for a week at a time, passing out tracts and doing street preaching. We have had members of Southside who have done good, short-term ministry in different countries, or at the Jail, or at the Rescue Mission. **These are all ministries to our Person X group. Praise the LORD!**

DEEPER REALITY: Our 'Person X' group is the Rescue Mission's, and India's, and/or the Mexico pastor's or Christian worker's **Person 2-6 Group!** That's where most of the real work is done. Yes, we can have a valid ministry to Person X, especially when we leave them connected to local churches and ministries. **HOWEVER EVERY farmer knows that he must do more than scatter a bunch of seed and then leave town!** Yes, whatever we do among Person X is a 'piece of cake!' when compared to the labor required from the native pastors or from the Rescue Mission Staff!

BUT, again, the PRIMARY QUESTION of this article is— WHO IS GOING TO TAKE THE GOSPEL TO THOSE IN OUR '2-6' WORLD?

And the answer is that I MUST! AND SO MUST YOU! But, we protest: "The people in my "2 to 6" world are not responsive to the gospel!" ... 'And, it's so hard... and what if it requires me to spend time with them every week...?'"

YOU KNOW: It is amazing the amount of time we spend EVERY WEEK on STUFF that does not have ETERNITY written on it! ... but we hold back on spending quality and quantity time with SOULS who do have eternity written on them!

Moreover, we are poor judges as to what is really happening. Many a great harvest has come after a number of apparent crop failures! Let us keep planting, watering. God will give the increase!

Second, we are simply called to be faithful in 'planting and watering!'

Third, look in the Bible— very often God has His servants in 'gospel-hardened' places! **Just ask Noah! And then remember, that Jesus says that the last days will be like the days of Noah!**

Forth, beware of modeling after the apparent success methods of the entertainment oriented religious harlot! Our lost world does not need PLAY ACTING visuals! They need REAL VISUALS— Christians who genuinely love and forgive, who are manifesting joy and hope in trials and tribulations, who manifest the COMPASSION of Jesus and who are walking in holiness.

A MASTER KEY:

With the folks in our “2-6” world, life tumbles in for all of them. They have both good and ‘bad’ things that happen to them. **And the same things happen to saints in Christ!** They do not have resources to help them deal with the trials and troubles. BUT YOU DO! **As they WITNESS you winning the battle** over bitterness, revenge, hate, fear, and resentments—the Gospel is being seen in Circles 2-6! **The MUSIC of the gospel is flowing from you. You are making them ‘THIRSTY’ and HUNGRY for good news, for GRACE to handle life!** Thus, when life does tumble in, we often have FRESH OPPORTUNITIES or “points of contact” to sow seeds of kindness and love! Love is, after all, meeting real needs.

THEREFORE, real ‘2-6’ evangelism/missions/witnessing starts with how I treat my wife, my family, those closest to me, those who are neighbors, those I work around, and/or those I may casually meet in the town/county where I live.

Real ‘2-6’ evangelism/missions/witnessing starts with being a congregation that loves, that forgives, that seeks to live holy and pure!

IF WE CANNOT OR IF WE REFUSE TO manifest love, forgiveness, and holiness in these settings— we become guilty of hypocrisy; we grieve the Holy Spirit; and ZEAL for TELLING the gospel shuts down! **Psalm 51 prescribes great healing medicine for this common spiritual disease!**

(Concentric Circles Concepts are drawn from *Concentric Circles of Concern*, by W. Oscar Thompson, Jr.)

Great Grace to each and every one! James Bell

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:

MONDAYS: Jail Ministry— First and Second Monday of each month at 7:30pm. Questions? Contact Mike Munday at 615-681-7533

TUESDAYS: Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM.

WEDNESDAYS: ☐ 6:30pm— Children Ministry/activities; ☐ 6:30pm— Youth Activities and Bible Study— (For both of these... enter via double doors by gym)

☐ 6:30pm— Wednesday CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE... Come in side entrance, iron steps... meet in Ladies Sunday School Room

LADIES BIBLE STUDY— Studies in the Gospel of Luke! ... NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, *April 11, 2017* @ 11:00am; Cindy Bell teaching. [Front door open at 10:45 till 11:05am; or come in Iron Steps side entrance!]

MEN: EVERY SATURDAY MORNING @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study! {*STUDYING the Epistle of First John*} AT THE back of Church building... Come in under the drive-thru awning, walk forward, coffee & biscuits WAITING!

Sunday Services For April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Sunday, April 2: 9:30am - Sunday School // 10:45am - Worship Service // *Noon Covered Dish meal 1pm - Early Afternoon Service*

Sunday, April 9: 9:30am - Sunday School // 10:45am - Worship Service // *Noon Covered Dish meal 1pm - Early Afternoon Service*

Sunday, April 16: RESURRECTION SUNDAY! 9:30am - Church-wide BRUNCH // 10:45am - Worship Service and the LORD'S SUPPER

Sunday, April 23: 9:30am - Sunday School // 10:45am - Worship Service // EVENING HOME GROUPS

April 30— 9:30am - Sunday School // 10:45am - Worship Service

Noon Covered Dish meal

**5:30pm - 7:30pm FAITHFUL MEN'S MONTHLY
FELLOWSHIP/STUDY/EQUIPPING**