

## Evangelism: Use God's Plan

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God's plan is that the world might be saved by the gospel (1 Cor. 15:2). That summary statement includes many aspects of God's work in our world and our acceptance of and involvement in that work according to God's purpose. Based on our current approach to church, I fear that the modern church has by and large lost confidence in God's plan. We are trying to attract people with everything but the gospel. We think people will come because the activities are fun (and free) and the "product" is right. We entice people with meals, refreshments, enjoyable activities...the list is long. We are enticing people with everything but the gospel. The average church member seldom thinks of the attractiveness of the gospel when visiting with friends or neighbors. Do you doubt it? When was the last time you offered someone a gospel survey or Bible study? My observation is that we offer prayer, benevolent or financial help, and secular activities. We are (unintentionally) training our children to grow up and leave the church when they find out that the church will not do for them as young adults what it did for them when they were part of the youth group. We are teaching self-serving Christianity. We are setting ourselves up in competition with the groups around us. We are trying to "catch" and keep people, including our own youth, with all kinds of activities and lures. We must learn again the lesson: **what you convert them with is what you will keep them with!**

I believe much of the success we are experiencing in Honduras and other mission areas is due to the fact that we are bringing people to Christ with the good news of the gospel. We offer Bible study, the opportunity to know God, and connection with God. That is why a recent trip to Honduras found me alongside a young 16-year-old girl, working in a campaign two years after I baptized her. That is why the churches are growing. To the extent that we encourage young Christians in mission areas to adopt the U.S. standards of how the church building looks and what the church can do for me, we will find that people will be attracted for the wrong reasons.

In the U.S., we have started down a difficult path we will find hard to sustain. The average church cannot hire ministers focused on demographic groups—children's minister, youth minister, singles minister, young adult minister, seniors minister—in addition to the task-oriented ministry needs—pulpit minister, outreach minister, involvement minister, education minister, administrative minister.

The gospel is attractive. We must get back to understanding, living, and communicating the essence of the gospel. God has a plan for this world. The gospel meets basic human needs. You and I can so live our lives that we "adorn" the gospel (1 Tim. 2:10). The church is declaration of God's plan and purpose and wisdom (Eph. 3:10-11). The plan of God may seem folly and foolishness to some—Paul shows us that such was also the case in the first century (1 Cor. 1:18).

The power of God is in the word of God. God has a plan that involves Christ (as the means for the salvation of the world), the church (as the message of God's love and wisdom), and Christians (as the ministers of reconciliation). By taking the gospel wherever we go in the world, Christians are involved in making more disciples, marking those disciples according to the teaching of God, and maturing those disciples to make more disciples.

God has no other plan.