

‘Matthew Sunday’ Introduces ‘My Hope America’ to Churches Across the US

There is a misnomer circulating out there.

At least that’s one North Carolina woman’s take on relationship evangelism.

To reach a friend or a neighbor for Christ—as Jaqui of Cornelius, N.C., explains—people think you have to do something monumental. Be a spiritual supernova.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

“It’s the little things—the little, bitty things,” she said, just before walking into church at Grace Covenant in Cornelius. “It’s the little things that make a difference.”

Your neighbor’s bushes need trimmed? Weeds need pulled? Their garbage can need wheeled back from the curb? That’s, what, all of two minutes out of your life?

Oh, and that half bag of fertilizer left over in your garage?

“What are you going to do with a half bag of fertilizer?” Jaqui said, half serious but fully passionate. “Spread it on the neighbor’s yard. Spread that hope around. Spread that joy around.”

That hope is what “Matthew Sunday” is all about. Last Sunday in Cornelius, N.C., and cities across the country, a relationship evangelism opportunity was unveiled by the name of *My Hope America with Billy Graham*.

After a few minutes, it was evident Jaqui was clear on the relationship evangelism concept. But the key for “Matthew

Sunday” was to get as many people clear on the concept, and to start praying for their unsaved family, friends and neighbors today.

“We’re always looking for creative ways to mobilize our congregation to engage in relationship evangelism,” said Michelle Hoverson, who has served as associate pastor for missions and outreach at Grace Covenant for more than a decade. “*My Hope America* is a great way to accomplish that.”

Churches are being asked to designate a Sunday as “Matthew Sunday.” At Grace Covenant, in each of its three services, *My Hope America* was introduced through a brief announcement and promotional video provided by BGEA and an information brochure was distributed in each bulletin.

Two *My Hope America* booths were set up for people to gather more information, ask questions, sign up for e-mail updates or to become a host “Matthew”—which comes from Matthew 9:9-13, where the apostle invited his friends over to meet Jesus over dinner.

Adapting to 2013, present-day “Matthew” hosts will invite their friends over for dinner or refreshments and show them a 30-minute *My Hope America* program, featuring music, testimonies and a gospel message from Billy Graham. The Matthew then gives a brief testimony of his or her own before inviting their guests to make a commitment to follow Jesus.

“You just invite people over for dinner or coffee and you let Billy Graham do the rest,” said Hoverson, who added that a lack of confidence keeps most people from sharing their faith. “But a program like *My Hope America* gives people the tools, and the tools help give you confidence to share Christ with others.”

But first, as Jaqui said, “You’ve gotta start now,” building those relationships.

“It starts by doing something for someone else that is so little it might be overlooked,” she said. “We’ve got to get back to the basics of kindness and about being real.”

For Jaqui that included reaching out in recent months by holding a craft afternoon for a few of her neighbor’s daughters, teaching them how to make a Valentine’s Day necklace for their mothers. It was such a hit, two of the three fathers she barely knew walked over to personally say thank you and now it’s opened up a dialogue about spiritual things, including getting back into church.

“I saw one couple get up early and go to church this morning,” she said. “All I did was give up a few afternoons of my time. Who can’t do that?”

It’s all about building that relationship, that trust, that equity where people will want to hear what’s different in your life.

“How’s that saying go?” said Jaqui who plans on opening her home as a *My Hope* “Matthew” in November. “People don’t care what you know until they know that you care—or something like that.”

And perhaps, Jaqui wonders, if that’s the ingredient missing in effective evangelism. Skipping over the “caring” part.

“You see someone else’s need and let them know you can help them out,” she said. “And if you know this neighbor likes this kind of coffee or a certain kind of dessert, invite them over.

“Knock their socks off with the little things.”

Click here for information on how to get you and your church involved in My Hope America with Billy Graham. This article originally appeared on .