

My New Year's Resolution

Back in November when autumn leaves were their brightest orange, I met with a group of young men on the campus of a small liberal arts college in New Hampshire. While these students were eating bagels and drinking coffee I began our Bible study by asking each guy to share his name, his major and how long he'd been a Christian.

When it was time for a young man named Cody to share, he said innocently: "I haven't given my life to Christ yet, but I'd like to." So before our meeting was finished we led Cody in a sinner's prayer, gave him a Bible and got him started on the road to discipleship by asking him to read the Gospel of Mark.

After our session, Cody walked over to me with his new Bible, clutching it carefully in both hands as if it were worth its weight in gold. He said, "I've never owned a Bible before," and then asked me to sign it. I wrote a Scripture reference on the title page and made sure he understood the difference between John and 1 John.

Now I pray for Cody almost every day. And when I do I realize that a generation has grown up right here in the United States that knows nothing of Jesus, church or basic Christian faith.

And they're not going to hear if we don't tell them.

There's nothing quite like the experience of leading someone to Christ. I love healings, prophecies, visions, worship, prayer and all the goose bumps that accompany God's presence, but nothing compares with the profound miracle of conversion. Introducing people to the Savior ought to be our primary passion.

Evangelism was certainly Jesus' priority. The first thing He told His disciples was, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17, NASB). When He began His public

ministry, He read from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Luke 4:18).

Jesus then preached nonstop for three years. He walked the length and breadth of Israel carrying His message. When everyone else was ready for a break, Jesus said, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also" (Mark 1:38). He was obsessed with sharing the news of God's amazing salvation.

Even when His life was about to end and He could hardly muster the strength to speak because of the pain of crucifixion, He led a criminal to faith.

I'll admit, my own zeal to win souls isn't as hot as it should be. And when I look at the American church, it seems we get excited about everything else but evangelism. We charismatics tend to chase supernatural experiences for ourselves rather than focus on people who have never heard the gospel one time.

Our priorities are as skewed as they are selfish. We run from one conference to another to hear what the prophets are saying about Obama's chances in 2012, or to have our dreams interpreted, or to ask so-and-so to lay hands on us for the 18th time so we can get yet another "special anointing."

We will even sow "miracle seed" in an offering plate to secure a financial breakthrough; yet few will sow the most precious seed, God's Word, into the hearts of people who have never heard that Jesus died for them.

Lately I've been humming the tune of an old Andraé Crouch song from the 1970s, "Tell Them," which says: "Tell them, even if they don't believe you / Just tell them, even if they don't receive you / Tell them for Me / Please tell them for Me / That I love them, and I came to let them know."

That's my theme song for 2011. As we step into a new year and examine our goals and dreams, I challenge you to make God's priorities yours. Get your eyes off yourself. Focus your faith on others. Look for the Codys around you. They want what you have, but you have to tell them how to find it.

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