

Pastor's Corner – 10-13-2018
Christ's Method Alone – He Showed Sympathy

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." – Ministry of Healing pg 143.

The second step in Christ's method is that he showed his sympathy by ministering to the needs of the people he encountered. Jesus was a man of great compassion and when he saw folks struggling and suffering he was compelled to do something about it. He wasn't content, for instance, to just sit by and let sick people stay sick. He had the power to heal, so he was going to use it.

I find it significant that in Jesus' method his focus was always on the needs of the other person. When he mingled, he did it with their best interests at heart. When he ministered, he focused on the needs that they themselves felt. In other words, he gave water to those who were thirsty, bread (and fish) to those who were hungry, and a Bible study to those who were seeking after God. His wasn't a "one size fits all" approach.

I think this is something that we're not very good at, tailoring our ministry to the perceived needs of our community. Instead we tend to design ministries (events) that we believe the people need – whether they think they need it or not.

Take for instance a good old fashioned cooking school. Now we know that most people could probably benefit from a healthier approach to eating. Most of our killer diseases today are lifestyle related. So we see sickness, we know people need to eat better, and we organize a vegan cooking school to address that need (keep in mind that we are the ones who perceive the need, we're not sure if the people we are trying to reach perceive that need or not). We promote the event, use great images of broccoli and apples, fresh water and smiling faces. We get the best vegan chef we can find and sit back and wait for the crowds to come in.

Usually there will be some kind of turn out for an event such as this. There are always some who feel the need to make dietary changes and are considering a plant based diet. But that need isn't felt by everyone (although many would indeed benefit). The guy who is perfectly happy living off McDonald's and Totino's Pizza (that was me as a teenager) is never going to come to our vegan cooking class. He simply doesn't feel the need.

When Jesus ministered he began with the needs that the people themselves recognized. Ultimately, their greatest need was to put their trust in Him and experience religious conversion. But not everyone realizes that need. Usually there are other things that are more pressing. Jesus focused on those things first, in order to build rapport and gain their confidence.

Sometimes we try to put on events that address felt needs. Financial classes, divorce care, and stop smoking seminars, are all examples of felt need seminars. These things are good in their own way and they definitely connect with a segment of the population who experiences those needs. But for all our events, we always seem to leave out the first part, the personal part, of Jesus' method.

We want to hold an event and sit back while the people come in and have their needs met by that event. Dave Ramsey is going to fix their financial problems. Chef Mark Anthony is going to teach them to eat vegetables and fix their health problems. The evangelist is going to speak to their spiritual needs and give em Jesus. But where's the personal effort in all of this? Where is part where we mingle first, learn of their needs, and then do something about it all on our own, without a seminar or church event? Without that personal touch we never actually win their confidence and so our appeal to follow Jesus fall on deaf ears.

That, to me, seems like a big difference between Jesus' method and the methods we use. We tend to turn our felt need outreach into an event or a seminar or a class. But rarely do we roll up our sleeves and get involved one on one.

If there's one thing that really stands out about Christ's method it is this – he held no seminars, no classes, and no events. His ministry was one on one, human to human. If we want to follow Christ's method we need to learn to do the same.

Which, of course, brings me to the Awaken workshop that is scheduled for Nov 9-10. This workshop is designed to help you learn how God has created you to mingle with those who don't know Him, identify needs, and do something about it. It's about following Jesus' example and personally making a difference in someone's life.

I encourage every adult member of our church to attend the Awaken workshop. Especially those who don't think they need it, don't think it sounds interesting, and don't want to give up their free time. Those who have become numb to the sense of God's calling are the ones in the greatest danger of missing his blessings. So sign up, come out, and walk with the rest of us as we seek to follow Christ's method.

Happy Sabbath
Pastor Tyler