THE LUTHERAN S ADOR



[Encouraging Word]

Servant Snapshots

She told me when

I was there in January

that all the struggles and

hardships she has had in

her life were worth it.

ay I indulge you with a few more snapshots of Brazilian Christians who are living testimonies that God is working as they are faithful to Him?

Marcos grew up in Lar Paraná, and through the faithful witness of the youths of the church there he came to salvation. God called him to study at the Bible school and seminary. After serving his internship at the Lar Paraná church, he is now serving the

church in Foz do Iguaçu, with his wife, Patricia, and little girl. Patricia grew up in the Lar Paraná church and is a willing worker alongside her husband.

A friend brought José Oséias to church in Londrina. He was saved while attending Bible camp in Campo Mourão. Oséias was called to the ministry and studied at the seminary in Campo Mourão. He and his wife, Tirza, are now pastoring

one of the churches in Vitória. Oséias shared how his church is reaching out to the people in their community with both spiritual and physical food.

Yara was won to Jesus through camp ministry. I met her at Central Church and had the privilege of being at the Bible school the year she studied there. It is wonderful to see her now, a grown woman married with a son, with such wisdom as she carries on her duties as a right-hand helper to Paul and Becky Abel in their camp ministry and at Bateias church. There is never a dull moment around her! Yara's two sisters are now Christians, her mother also became a Christian before her death, and

Yara recently opened up her home to her father who is still seeking. She has every confidence that he also will come to saving knowledge of Jesus.

Sr. Evaldo and D. Lourdes have participated in the Free Lutheran Church for many years. I remember as a child visiting them on their farm. Their home was always open for services, no matter where they lived. Their three children studied at the Bible school and now participate at the São Braz Church in Curitiba. Now the third gen-

eration is growing up and participating in church. Their oldest granddaughter studied at the Bible school last year. Sr. Evaldo was one of the early presidents of the Brazilian Association. D. Lourdes is a wonderful prayer warrior and visits many homes in the Batéias community. She told me when I was there in January that all the struggles and hardships she has had in her life were worth it. She has learned

valuable lessons and knows how God has been faithful to her, and through Him she can give to others.

If ever you have a chance to visit the work of the Brazilian Free Lutheran Church, jump at the opportunity! The people will greet you with open arms and hearts. They will willingly share how God is working amongst them. Please continue to pray for your brethren in Brazil as they reach out to others with the good news of Jesus.

— Carol Knapp Sunburg Free Lutheran Sunburg, Minn.

May 2006 Volume 44, Number 5



ELUTHERANAMBASSADOR

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For subscription changes and information:

The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441. 763-545-5631 or e-mail at luthamb@aflc.org

Subscriptions rates:

\$17 a year, Group Rate, U. S.

\$18 a year, Individual, U. S.

\$20 a year, International

Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN, and additional mailing office.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441

Sound Bites

And it is God's will to call men to eternal salvation, to draw them to himself, convert them, beget them anew, and sanctify them through this means and in no other way — namely, through his holy Word (when one hears it preached or reads it) and the sacraments (when they are used according to his Word).

— Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration

Evangelism is too often relegated to a statement on the front of a bulletin instead of a value by which we live.

— Mark Mittelberg

We have seen corrupt, hardened, and angry people — people we would never expect to be open to the gospel — come to Jesus. And sometimes all it takes is a word, a crack in the door, or the slightest invitation. ... Sometimes a simple word on your part might be the thing God uses to finally reach someone.

 Victoria Michaels Rogers "How to Talk About Jesus without Freaking Out"

Rather than measuring the church by its attendance, we will measure it by its deployment. One of the greatest enemies of evangelism is the church as fortress or social club; it sucks Christians out of their neighborhoods, clubs, workplaces, schools, and other social networks and isolates them in a religious ghetto.

Brian McLaren

School of



By Wes Thompson

Ten tips from someone who's been there









vangelism can be an emotionally charged word. For some it stirs up images of pious servants working in the mountains of China, plains of Africa or jungles of South America. For others it means a lone suited gentleman at a podium addressing hundreds of thousands of people in a stadium. Still others picture someone on a street corner teaching and preaching to passers by.

Evangelism is all these things. But for me it has taken on a personal challenge to live an average life in the suburban Twin Cities and minister in my workplace and neighborhood. I've learned that evangelism isn't always a focused effort targeting conversion. It can also be presenting the gospel, the good news of Christ, by personally bearing witness to his works.

It's easy to get the cold sweats during a sermon with a challenge to go and preach the word of the Lord to all nations. It can be even harder to navigate everyday life with that mentality. I've spent several years as a dedicated missionary in foreign lands and have since been called to enter the frontier of becoming Christ-like in suburban America amongst my peers. I don't, by any means, have a lock on how it's done. But I am moving forward one step at a time and am able to share out of my heart in proportion to what God blesses me with. Here are ten things I thought I knew but had to learn through trial and error.

Secure your own oxygen mask before assisting others

The best way to share God with others is out of an abundance within yourself. Sure, God's truth can stand

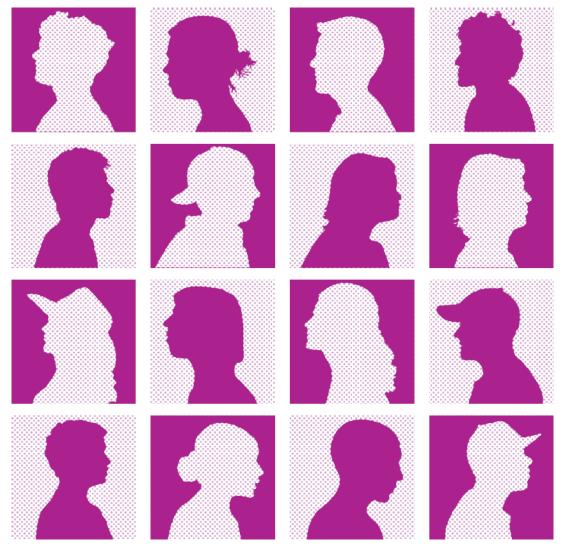
alone as a testament for all to see. But it's that spark of Christ within us — the vessel we can become for God's Spirit to move in and through — that becomes powerful, something bigger than ourselves. I believe God's primary interest is in Him and me. If me serving Him is getting in the way of our personal connection, then it's not really serving Him well.

Keep it simple

For some reason I perpetually forget the basics, which can sustain me day-to-day and should be the foundation of my spiritual life. They consistently address issues that come up, issues that I often over think. They are also the exciting part that others should hear. 1) God is holy, perfect and has a plan for me. 2) I am a sinner and never capable of a holy life on my own. 3) God became a man named Jesus and died to bring me back to Him. 4) I need to make a personal step to ask Christ to come into my life, wash away my sin, kill the old man in me and give me new life.

It's the sin that stinks

I remember burning, re-buying, then destroying and eventually re-getting a Van Halen album in my youth. I went through a few phases where I was purging myself of the evil influences on my way to enlightenment. This was a good thing, but my motivations weren't from God; they were from a youth group I was attending that periodically struck out to seek and destroy strongholds of the devil. Like I said, this was a good thing, but the tone of the hunt left people in a frenzy to root out evil externally without much self-examination. This led to a gen-



eral mentality of crusades where I would champion holiness and leave a trail of wreckage behind me. On one such demolition, I told my little sister that she was "going to hell for listening to that music." She was attending a parochial school and I reminded her that she should know better.

I have since realized that it was her sin that she was going to hell for, not the music in particular. I have also realized that from that perspective, I was destined for the eternal roast myself and that on a fundamental level we were both equally guilty. Sin is sin and unacceptable in God's presence because of His holiness. There will always be a wide assortment of sin and plenty to point fingers at because there are always sins you will be tempted by and those that won't tempt you. Talking with others, particularly about the gospel, reminds me that there aren't always good people and bad people. We're all sinful in God's eyes, the difference being some are accepting forgiveness from Jesus.

I am not God's last hope

I have been driven to extreme depression on many

'It's not

accounts by the impending doom of the human race and the need to literally save the world. Of course once they're saved they need to become spirit filled, then discipled, then tithe, then active in programs of sharing their faith, then in specialized ministries (all pertinent things) and well ... For some of us there is no end to our extreme urgency in executing God's plans. I became a free man when I heard God whisper in my heart that I wasn't the last hope for life on earth. He had everything under control and I was fortunate because He was letting me help Him with His job. He doesn't need me to proclaim His greatness. He lets me proclaim His greatness. If I'm quiet, the stones will cry out. He requires me to do justly. love mercy and walk humbly with my God. To obey

is better than sacrifice. The fate of those who haven't heard the gospel is the same, but now I've been paying more attention to who's calling the shots and pacing myself according to His personal requests. No more and no less.

Inspiration works better than obligation

I've seen people evangelize by highlighting one's condemnation. My personal take is that God doesn't condemn, He convicts. The difference being that, yes, we are condemned to pay for our inherent sin, but that's only half of the picture. The other is the good news, literally: the gospel. The correction, the rebuke, is to show us our need. The gospel tells us there's a better way: there's freedom and liberation from sin. You can become who you were designed to be from the beginning. You can be healed. With Christ alive and well inside, you can become the fruits of who He is! That is, you can have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. I think we walk a treacherous path when we are broadcasters of God's judgment

about numbers of conversions'

and don't, in the same breath, ensure people hear of His salvation.

One size does not fit all

I used to fear evangelism, not from a lack of trying, but from a bad fit. I used to do the Christian equivalent of sandwich boards, handing out flyers and door-to-door sales for salvation.

Testifying to the works of God in your life and His salvation can be a very natural, beautiful and powerful thing once you find your stride. Often it's as simple as hear, obey, and repeat. The way God set things up is that we have our own lives with our own stories and our own contributions to His kingdom. I believe if we have a vibrant, active faith it seeps out of us to our neighbors, our co-workers, our friends and our families. There's a time and a place for rising up in the street and bearing witness, but if it's not your style then find what is and go with it.

Actions speak louder than words

A friend of mine said that as Westerners he thought we often spend lots of time on the *teachings* of Jesus and don't spend enough time emulating the *works* of Jesus. I know I fall into this category.

The gospel's a journey not a race

Evangelism is more than an eternal fire insurance policy. It's not about numbers of conversions; it's about service to God and the desire to reclaim His heavenly

kingdom here on earth. It's about reconnecting His children with their Father and empowering their lives through salvation from sin of thought, word and deed. That's really hard to do in a week-long missions trip to the Dominican Republic, so don't be discouraged if you feel a slump after that mountain top experience. Everything you feel at a retreat, a mission trip or a conference is still there inside you



and available whenever you're as focused as you are during those times for the rest of your life. It won't always be miraculous healings, deliverance and building schools or churches. Sometimes a good witness of the gospel is finding a plunger and unclogging a toilet at church or biting your tongue when someone is infuriating you. The good news is that evangelism is a lifestyle, not an event.

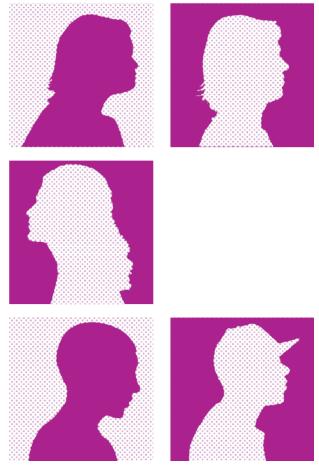
Play nice

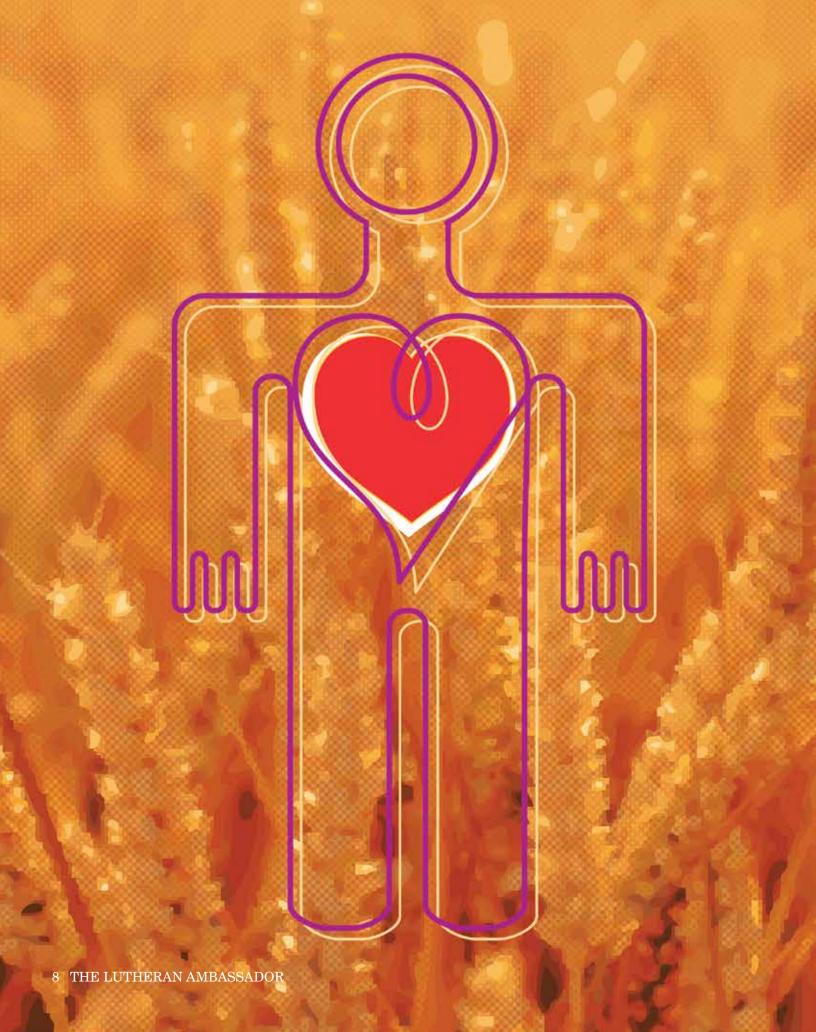
I've grown to see a lot of wisdom in being a nice person. Not in being a pushover or a "yes" man, but being courteous, respectful and concerned for others. You can have dozens of chapters of Scripture memorized, rock solid doctrine, be a prayer warrior and tithe religiously, but if you act like a jerk people won't listen to you.

Giving to you gets me more

Sharing your faith is a healthy part of the cycle. If you don't you may get stagnant. If you find yourself without anything to share then maybe your evangelistic goals are too high or God's not so alive in your life. See number one.

Wes Thomsen, a member of Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn., creates media for the Internet, film and television.





By Pastor Craig Wentzel pe for harvest Are you checking the fields?

serve a parish in rural North Dakota. The farmers here have been plagued by an infinity of problems in recent years, including: unfavorable weather conditions, rising fuel, chemical and seed costs, insect attacks, low crop prices, sometimes low yields, and not being able to afford to quit. Yet, they are always looking forward to the next crop, seeking to improve their equipment and farming techniques throughout the winter.

After the growing season, when the color of their wheat begins to turn to golden brown (with white "beards"), they know they had better get their combines ready. They will check their fields daily, if possible, to see if the crops are ripe enough. Depending on conditions (dry or wet) it will only be a couple of weeks until harvest, which will not be determined by the quantity of the grain in the field, but by its ripeness!

Consider Jesus' word to His disciples in John 4:35: "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" I used to think that Jesus' point in this verse was that there are so many people in the world who need to be won for Him. But we all know that just by looking at the world around us! Rather, He is saying that there are a lot of people who are spiritually "ripe" for winning! There are three lessons about evangelism in this verse:

Outward appearances have nothing to do with spiritual "ripeness"

The farmer can discern the ripeness of his grain by outward characteristics like color, weight, and moisture content. But our eyes can't always discern spiritual ripeness. Our two-point parish recently began a 40 Days of Purpose Campaign in which we are studying "The Purpose-Driven Life," by Rick Warren, to find God's purpose for our lives. It would be natural for us to extend an invitation to the surrounding community. But at one church, past experience has shown us that the community may not be open to our invitation. So we assumed they wouldn't be open to this book. But it is hard to tell what God is doing inside of people, or whether people are spiritually ripe. Maybe God is doing a work in their lives. By looking at them, we can't say anyone is "far from the kingdom" because we don't know.

Only Jesus knows the "ripeness" of the heart

The Lord told Samuel in I Samuel 16:7: "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature ... for the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." We usually have to make our judgments by outward appearances, but the Lord looks much deeper. "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). "He knows the secrets of the heart" (Psalm 44:21).

As we began our 40 Days of Purpose, one of our members placed a copy of "The Purpose-Driven Life" at the place where she worked. She was pleased to see that the workers were picking it up and reading it. In fact, one even bought an audio version to listen to while she was driving! One copy was requested by a member's relative so she could join a group of ASCS office workers who were studying it 25 miles away. Perhaps the Lord is using the book as a backdoor into people's lives.

Only Jesus can show us "ripeness"

He says that we need to first "lift up our eyes." This means taking the focus away from us, this world and its opinion of us, our past experiences of failure or defeat, and our path in life. And we need to "lift up our eyes" to Jesus in prayer and His Word. We need to see His love for each person and His power to change their hearts.

Then we need to "look at the fields" — the people around us. Look at the conditions in their lives right now. The conditions may be right for them to "ripen" quickly towards Jesus. Sickness, grief, or some other hardship may be ripening them. There are many afflicted with sickness or ailments in our area right now. One day, out at the local gas pump, I had the opportunity to pray with a fellow for his wife who is very sick. Are the conditions right for those around you to ripen? Are the fields white for harvest around you?

Wentzel is pastor of Living Word Lutheran, Edmore, N.D.

Those annoying phone calls can be your mission field

By Barbara Long Telemarketing God

"Hello? ... No, all our windshields are fine. But could I ask you a question?" "Sure!"

"If, on your way home today, you were in an accident and died, do you know for sure you'd go to heaven?"

"No."

"Would you like to know?"

"Yes."

his is just one of the many phone calls I've had with telemarketers who call my house. Praise the Lord! It's proof that you don't have to leave your home to get opportunities to tell hungry people about Jesus, our wonderful Savior.

I have found telemarketers to be mostly spiritually hungry people. Occasionally I find one to be a Christian, and we rejoice together. Very few will ever be rude (after all, I still might decide to get a new windshield someday). Most are thankful to be talked to kindly, and many are excited to hear the wonderful news of Jesus.

As I begin asking them questions, God

prompts me to pray for His

Spirit to con-

vict and work in

the heart of the person I'm talking to in Oklahoma, Bombay, Seattle, etc. Depending on their responses, and in answer to my prayer for wisdom as I talk, the God Who loves the lost directs me to say different things each time. It's amazing how He leads even before I know I'm talking to a pastor's son who's walked away from God, a Catholic who didn't know she could have assurance of salvation because of what Jesus has done for her, or a man who has been wondering about eternity.

I believe God's Word. I believe in heaven. I believe in hell. I know that some people I've known in the past may be in hell now because, when they opened the door in conversation to spiritual things, I wasn't prepared or was too afraid to say anything about Jesus.

Evangelism Explosion, Sharing Jesus without Fear, and Child Evangelism Fellowship classes all prepared me to have an answer. Ray Comfort's book, "Hell's Best Kept Secret," and being around soul winners have shown me the importance of using the law effectively in witnessing. Learning about specific prophecies given in the Old Testament and fulfilled in Jesus' life gives me a way to show people that the Bible truly is a supernatural book given to us by our Creator-God. Trusting the Holy Spirit to guide gives confidence and joy.

One lady I talked to called me back about two weeks later to thank me. She said, "When you talked to me about Jesus, the girls around me heard me talking to you and when I hung up they brought their Bibles over to me and showed me more. Now I'm a Christian!"

Another young girl said I was the third person that day to talk to her about reading the Bible. She thought that was a sign that God was trying to tell her something. We still stay in touch via email. (Some telemarketers will take down an email or web address for a Christian organization, though they cannot give out their own information.)

Once, as I talked to a sweet woman about the Bible, a supernatural book, she said, "Yes, I know what you're talking about." Then she went on to tell me that she had

chan-

neled a book and had many experiences with the supernatural.

The Lord brought verses in Deuteronomy to my mind and I opened my Bible as I spoke to her about the two different sources for supernatural power. I had the words of Deuteronomy 18:9-14 underlined, and when I read them she became very quiet. She asked me if that was in the Bible and where it was. Then I flipped the pages of my Bible and noticed underlined verses in Isaiah 47. I had not been looking for any other verses but God showed them to me. After I read verses 12-15 to her, she said, "That explains some things that have happened to me lately." She had never read the Bible and didn't know that channeling was wrong. She thanked me profusely for telling her. I am telling you this story because I want to show you it was all God. He will lead you. He wants souls saved and will answer your prayers

for opportunities.

Every toy, entertainment or possession in this world loses its fascination. Winning souls never gets old. Jesus said the seed is cast on many types of ground. The ground of our country is full of things to choke out the Word. May I encourage you in pulling out the weeds in your home (by pulling some plugs) and letting the Word dwell richly in your family? You will never regret it. Teach your children to live for eternity. Pray with them for the lost. Show them "The Way of the Master" video series. (See a sample video at www.wayofthemaster.org) They'll want to be soul winners, too. You'll have no greater joy.

Long is a member of Atonement Free Lutheran, Arlington, Wash., where she serves alongside her husband, Pastor Rick Long.





in Over 10 Percent of Your City's Population to Jesus on One Day!"

This advertisement came from a well-intentioned evangelistic organization encouraging communities to embrace their program of sharing

the good news. I'm sure it occurs to us that it is a bit presumptuous and even arrogant to suggest we can quantify the power of the good news and Spirit of God in such ways. Yet, how do we reach our city's population?

Our Mission: Reach and Disciple

The mission of our church is, "Do what it takes to reach and disciple people for Jesus." We take this mission seriously as we believe reaching people and discipling them for Jesus is what God has called the Church to do. If there was an evangelism program that would win 10 percent of our community for Jesus in one day — sign us up! Yet, we have learned that there is no such program. The gift of salvation is all of God and His grace and has nothing to do with our efforts or evangelistic programs (Ephesians 2:8-9).

With this truth before us, we have sought to work as ambassadors of Christ (II Corinthians 5:20), wanting to work alongside and even stand on Christ's coattails as He leads us into our community. Supported by the Evangelism Commission and the grants they have made available, our church has made targeted and varied attempts to reach our community with the message Christ has given us to share. Some of these efforts have been successful in introducing people to Jesus, and others have not.

What did not work for us

From our experiences, we have learned that impersonal contacts with people are ineffective in introducing another to Jesus. We have tried impersonal evangelism where local newspaper advertisements, and mass mailings have been implemented. Over a period of one year, we twice-monthly ran an inviting, informative quarter-page advertisement in our local newspaper. The thought was, the more readers see our invitation, the more likely they will respond. In addition, we also sent two direct mailings of personalized full-color cards invit-

ing our community to join us in a special message series. On each mailing, we sent 10,000 cards.

As you can see, this was an impersonal approach to reaching others for Jesus. This approach didn't work. The advertisements and direct mailing had little to no effect on our attendance or new persons attending.

Other impersonal outreach efforts have been a weekly message on the local (secular) radio station over a tworeach over the eight-week period of the campaign. It is here that we have seen our most effective outreach. As a church family, when we find that we are in this together, working together and supporting each other in the common goal of reaching our community for Christ, the Lord blesses the outcome.

Molstre is pastor of Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Washington.

dos and don'ts

year period. We also invited a national speaker to conduct an evangelism seminar. I am not discounting or limiting the power of the Word being sent over the air waves (I wouldn't dare). Nor would I suggest evangelism seminars are unimportant. We simply didn't see people coming to Jesus through them, nor was our congregation motivated to reach others for Jesus. When evangelism is something that someone else does or teaches us about instead of something we actively embrace and do as a church body, the results are weak — at least in our church.

What did work for us

It is our experience that the most effective means of outreach is when a believer is motivated to love a seeking friend enough to lead him or her to Jesus. The Bible tells us that without love we can accomplish nothing for Him (I Corinthians 13:2-3). Truly, effective evangelism begins and ends with love. "We love because he first loved us" (I John 4:19).

To promote reaching out in the love of Jesus, our church plans events that encourage our people to invite a friend to church. We make this challenge an event in which the whole church participates. "Friendship Sundays" and "Celebration Sundays" are planned throughout the year with special desserts or lunch after the service to give our people an excuse to invite a friend. The church fills with people. Friends inviting friends works. Yet, remember the point: It is a friend inviting a friend to the place where they can meet Jesus (John 2:42).

The most effective outreach for us is when we plan an all-church campaign around an evangelistic theme. This campaign is over a six- to eight-week period of time. We have a prayer team praying for the campaign. We have our small group team creating new groups to welcome new faces. We challenge our children's ministry and youth ministry to join in the theme of the campaign. In effect, we have the entire church focused on out-





Unconventional

God's Word is heaping with ideas

od's Word gives frequent, delightful examples of what might seem to qualify as "unconventional evangelism." For instance, who would have thought a large fish might be part of a plan to bring the city of Nineveh to repentance?

The Apostle Paul, in an attempt to gain a hearing from the intellectual elite of Athens, used the Athenian idols to get their attention. Why would Paul do something so unconventional? "... his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols" (Acts 17:16). What was the response of Paul, the whatever-it-takes-I'll-do evangelist? He said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with the inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What you therefore worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:22-23). In my humble opinion, "You wicked, idolatrous, unbelieving pagans: repent!" would have been a more productive message.

But unconventional, beyond-the-walls-of-a-synagogue, meet-them-where-they-are-evangelism was God's plan that day. Paul the evangelist was God's means to an end, presenting Christ and Him crucified. "... so that I may by all means save some" (I Corinthians 9:22) was Paul's single-minded motivation.

On Mount Carmel, Elijah posed a timeless question for King Ahab, Queen Jezebel and their idol-worshipping prophets. "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him," said Elijah (I Kings 18:21). Elijah's question was really directed at God's people, who were going astray, led by those who had dismissed God's absolute truth. Elijah could have prayed for God's wrath to fall on those unbelievers, who should have known better. While that did happen later, unconventional evangelism took place first in a type of side-by-side comparison. Ahab gathered "all Israel" (I Kings 18:19) so they could witness 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets

of Asherah in action. With 850-to-1 odds, Elijah presented evidence of Jehovah God, the means to an end. Those who opposed the Lord in disobedient idolatry presented their case to no avail. Elijah prayed and then presented the Lord's truth — and truth prevailed. Unconventional evangelism? Means to an end? Yes and yes!

evangelism

to reach the lost for Christ

Subtlety has never been one of my strengths, so here's the deal: many evangelical Christians have chosen to recommend silence in response to Dan Brown's best-selling book, "The DaVinci Code," and the May 17 release of a movie by the same name. Their thought is that a strong biblical, Christian challenge would only serve to elevate the movie's success. While that may in fact happen, my response to that assumption is, "Say what?"

God's Word has been deceptively manipulated and misrepresented by Brown. He asserts his fiction is fact. In reality, Brown has braided strands of deception with just enough truth so as to weave fiction, fallacy and heresy, into a believable cord. Testimonies of "The DaVinci Code" readers confirm its danger. Perhaps if Christians quietly ignore this best selling book and the movie, it will indeed sink into oblivion — or not.

Could this, in fact, be an opportunity? What might happen if Christ's church on earth would rise up prayerfully, and in Jesus' name, stand firm on the truth of God's Word? Would some come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Would they be rescued from fatal fiction passed off as fact?

I am collaborating with a fellow colleague to present to the public the truth of God's Word, in response to Brown's fiction. Pastor Brian Dixon, who serves Bethel and Goshen Moravian congregations near Leonard, N.D., and our congregation at West Prairie Free Lutheran, Kindred, N.D., covet your prayers for the evening of April 27. As fact and fiction are placed side by side, we pray the outcome would be as clear as it was for Israel assembled on Mount Carmel!

Is silence ever "unconventional evangelism"? You decide. What are the Lord's means to His end? Check Ephesians 4:11-16: By God's grace in His strength may we "speak the truth in love."

Hoops is pastor of West Prairie Free Lutheran in Kindred, N.D.

A partial list of resources:

"The DaVinci Code Deception," an informative DVD available at : www.grizzlyadams.tv or 1-800-811-0548.

"The Gospel Code," by Ben Witherington III; Inter Varsity Press; Downers Grove, III.

"Cracking the DaVinci Code," by James Garlow and Peter Jones; Victor/ Cook Communications Ministries, Colorado Springs, Colo.

"Truth and Fiction In the DaVinci Code," by Bart Ehrman; Oxford University Press: Oxford, NY.

"Deciphering The DaVinci Code," a bulletin insert; brief but informative overview of the book; available from Christian History Institute; Box 540, Worcester, PA 19490. Phone: 610-584-3500.

Reporting for auty

or many years I have wanted to learn how to make quilts. I would read magazines, go to quilt shows, buy patterns, and say to myself, someday, I will learn how to do that. Well, about five years ago I took a class with a local quilter, and you could say the rest is his-

sew and quilt. It is my way to relax, to get away from the stresses in life. For some it is their passion, for me it is pure enjoyment.

tory. I enjoy every minute I can cut,

The work of evangelism should be a passion for

us, also. When I think of the work the Lord wants us to be

Connie Koinnen

doing for Him, I should have the same passion as I do for quilting. Evangelism is an earnest effort to spread the gospel. It is calling men and women to Jesus.

I must confess that I have never been very verbal about my faith. I have always prayed that others would see Jesus in my life and actions. But He wants me out of that comfort zone. He wants us in situations where we have opportunities to share. Sometimes we are uncomfortable, other times the words come naturally. When He is in my life, it shouldn't be hard at all. We are to be bearers of good news, showing God's love — not just talking about love, but practicing

it. It is showing Jesus' love, being available for Him to work His love through me. He's interested in our availability more than our ability.

The ABCs of evangelism, in the book "Friendship Evangelism: The Caring Way to Share Your Faith" by Arthur McPhee, are:

Acceptance: respect unbelievers as people.

Benevolence: love those you hope to reach.

Caring: care for those you hope to reach; caring about them is not enough.

Learn to listen, show an interest in them, cultivate a friendship and then share our faith. "Success isn't leading someone to Christ. Success is acting out your Christian life, sharing the gospel and trusting God for the results," writes Bill Fay in "How Can I Share My Faith Without an Argument?"

When working on a quilt, sometimes I will chose a pattern that will only take a few short days or weeks to complete, other times the pattern is very complicated and takes months, sometimes more than a year to complete. I can draw a parallel to sharing my faith with others: When we share our faith, sometimes God brings the results quickly, other times we

may not see the results in our lifetime. The seed has been planted, and God brings in the results. Isaiah 55:11 says, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

It's all about availability! How can I be more available for God's use? Where will He use me? I do not know the answers to these and many other questions. I just need to report for duty. Only with His help can I be open to His leading wherever, whenever, and however He pleases.

enjoyed a visit to the fabric store the other day and heard a Christian radio program over the speaker system. What a nice

surprise! A "thank you" brought a smile to the clerk's face. Little things, sharing what you hold dear in life, these are all part of sharing God's love. Help me, Lord, to share Your love in the little things of life. Just as I cut and sew, piece by piece on my quilt, may Your Kingdom grow as we share Your love to others we meet day by day.

Koinnen is a member of Our Savior's Free Lutheran in Stanley, N.D.



AMBASSADOR PUBLICATIONS

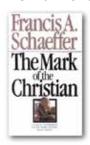
Minneapolis, Minnesota

To Order Resources

Available from AFLC Parish Education at (763) 545-5631 or parished@ aflc.org. Note that some of the materials may be borrowed from the Parish Ed lending library.

AFLC Parish Education RESOURCES

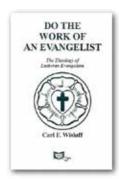
The Mark of the Christian



Christians have not always presented a pretty picture to the world. Too often we have failed to show the beauty of love, the beauty of Christ, the holiness of God, and the world has turned away. This challenge from Francis Schaeffer asks. "Is

there no way to make the world look again, this time at true Christianity?" \$6

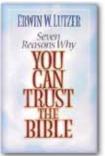
Do the Work of an Evangelist



Representing the best of evangelical Lutheran Pietism, Dr. Carl Wisløff writes with clarity and earnestness regarding the Biblical meaning of evangelism, obstacles to evangelism, baptism and evangelism, and the importance of law and gos-

pel in evangelism as understood and applied in Lutheranism. \$5

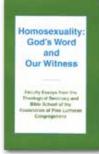
Seven Reasons Why You Can Trust the Bible



In a society where relativism is the most acclaimed philosophy, Erwin Lutzer takes readers on a journey where they are asked some of the most fundamental questions a person could ask. In his readable yet pro-

found style, he critically examines proof of the authenticity of the Bible. \$11

Homosexuality: God's Word and Our Witness



Written by AFLC Schools faculty members, the goal of this booklet is to affirm what Scripture teaches concerning homosexuality and to consider the witness of the Church over the centuries, while

encouraging Christians to compassionately minister to those who are tempted or trapped by the homosexual lifestyle. \$2

Christianity and Islam



The fastest growing religion in the world, Islam has more than 13,000 mosques in North America alone. What do Muslims think about Jesus? How do we talk to our Muslim neighbors about Christ? Four 25-minute pro-

grams with accompanying 32-page study guide help answer these questions and set forth key differences between Christianity and Islam. *DVD or VHS video* \$33.95 each

TRACTS \$.15 each

Can I Be Forgiven?
Do Good People Go to Heaven?
Is There a God?
Where Are You Going?

AFLBS'H 1 Can By Pastor Wade Mobley

was trying to convince someone to go to Bible school.

While attending the 1995 Free Lutheran Youth convention in Estes Park, Colo., I was introduced to Pastor Jim by my pastor. I knew right away that this man, who was serving in Fosston, Minn.

rom the moment I met Pastor Jim Johnson, he

DIDPER

Pastor Jim Johnson talks to a prospective AFLBS student at the 2003 FLY convention in Estes Park, Colo. Johnson, who is dean of AFLBS, will step down from his position at the Annual Conference in June. He has accepted a call to serve Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.

was a fan of AFLBS. After four years of college, I was being challenged by God to attend Bible school, and while Jim didn't directly influence my decision, his enthusiasm made an impression.

When I enrolled that fall we were without a dean at AFLBS. As a newcomer I was oblivious to the vacancy, but I noticed that a lot of people seemed to be working hard to compensate. As a former journalist and friend of the Bible school, Jim volunteered his time to help put together some new literature to court future students.

The students at AFLBS observed his passion for the schools, and when it came time to select a speaker for spring banquet it made sense to invite its number one fan.

When I heard that Pastor Jim was selected for the dean's position, my first thought was: "Hey, that guy loves the Bible school." That fall we got to know our new dean in "AFLC terms:" James L. (for Lyle, but it's spelled like "L-Yell") Johnson — you know, the one with all the kids (approximately 8, 6, 4, 2, 0, -1, -3, -6, -8 at the time). This was the guy who once held up his summer team so he could witness to a young man in a public park. Hey, this guy loves Jesus!

I remember one of our first days in class: "Can anyone quote to me some Scripture verses about assurance of salvation?" Awkward silence. "Well you're about to learn some. John 5:24, I John 5:11-13, Romans 10:9-13, Romans 5:6-8." Then we learned that his nieces memorized all of James 1 when they were young, and that we were about to. Then came II Timothy 3 and about 20 verses on personal evangelism. Gulp. That's when we learned that this guy loved God's Word and was going to make sure we did, too.

I got to know Pastor Jim a little better than anticipated during that first year on campus. As a resident assistant in the men's dorm, I became acting resident head early in the year due to unanticipated circumstances. It wasn't an easy assignment, but Pastor Jim guided me through the trials: "Brother, you don't always have to come stand in my office before you make a decision." And then

when I caught on: "Bingo, loving it!" One of my responsibilities was locking up the chapel after curfew. Like most

See JOHNSON, page 19

World Missions extends calls

Members of the AFLC World Missions Committee took action on six applicants seeking a call to world missions work.

Meeting on March 31 and April 1, committee members passed motions to extend calls to two missionary families. Nate and Rhoda Jore, currently serving a seminary internship in Minot, N.D., were called as AFLC missionaries. They hope to begin a new AFLC work in Uganda later this year. Tomasz and Miriam Chmiel, serving a seminary internship in Mason, Wis., were called as AFLC missionaries on loan to East European Mission Network. They hope to begin work in the Ukraine. Committee members expect to hold a commissioning service in June at the Annual Conference in Warm Beach Conference Center in Stanwood, Wash.

Committee members also approved two men as short-term missionaries. Aaron Kronke, Bethel Park, Pa., and Ben Jore, Plymouth, Minn., hope to work for as long as one year in Tanzania.

Two families were accepted as missionary candidates by the committee members. Andy and Monica Coyle, Plymouth, Minn., and Pastor Kevin and Pam Olson, Savage, Minn. Andy Coyle is currently in his second year at AFLTS. Pastor Olson, who currently serves as director of AFLC Youth Ministries, recently spent a nine-month sabbatical with his family in Tanzania, where he taught at the Waama Bible School.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Shane McLoughlin, a senior seminarian, will spend his internship at Grace Free Lutheran and Zion Free Lutheran in Valley City, N.D., under the direction of Pastor Joel Rolf.

Pastor Steven Lombardo, who currently serves Bethlehem Lutheran, Morris, Ill., has accepted a call to serve St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran, Gifford, Ill.

Pastor Paul Wigtil has resigned from Word of Life Lutheran, Mankato, Minn. His future plans have not been finalized.

Wilderness Bible Camp celebrates 25 years in July

Special service planned

Wilderness Bible Camp will celebrate 25 years of ministry this summer. Located 10 miles south of Lake Park, Minn., the camp has been used by AFLC campers since 1981.

This summer, Wilderness Bible Camp's AFLC family camp will be July 11-16. The theme for the camp, taken from Psalm 23, is "Beside Still Waters."

Special speakers at the camp will be Pastor Jon Wellumson, who serves Emmanuel Free Lutheran in Williston, N.D., and Pastor Wade Mobley, who serves Living Word Free Lutheran in Sioux Falls, S.D.

A special service to commemorate the anniversary will be held at 7 p.m. on July 15.

Anyone interested is invited to attend the camp. For more information and to register, please contact Pastor Terry Olson, who serves Trinity Free Lutheran, Grand Forks, N.D., at his office (701) 772-1218, home (701) 352-0891, or cell (701) 330-5757.

JOHNSON, from page 18

of our teachers, Jim was still working at 11 p.m. many nights.

One of the most enduring "Jim Johnson" moments in my life happened after a midnight service prior to Christmas vacation in 1999. My beeline-to-bed path was interrupted by, "Brother, what are your intentions with Michele Deubner? Are you going to marry her, or let her get on with her life?" Tactless, but effective. We were married seven months later.

As the years went by, God kept me in close contact with Pastor Jim: First as an assistant in the men's dorm, then as a member of the Free Lutheran Youth Committee, then as dean of men, and finally as a pastor seeking to support AFLBS from the local congregation. Regardless of the setting, the lessons were the same: Love Jesus, love people, preach the Word, equip the saints, respect your authority, support those working with you,

read your Bible, don't defend or justify yourself, pray hard, we're here to serve the students and the local congregation, tell others about Jesus, quit complaining, stop the blame game, ... etc.

These lessons remained consistent through good and challenging times alike. The enthusiasm, focus and faithfulness never changed. And through it all, the pastor became the mentor who would become my friend — AFLBS's number one fan.

Jim, Linda, Liz, Hannah, Lydia, Ben, Grace, Seth, Miah, Isaiah, and Titus — thank you for your faithful service to our Lord and our Bible school. Keep serving Jesus; just take your faithfulness a couple time zones west. And never lose your passion as AFLBS's number one fan.

Mobley lives in Sioux Falls, S.D., where he serves with his wife, Michele, at Living Word Free Lutheran Church. He may be reached at pastorwade@livingwordfreelutheran.org.

World Missions

Pastoral education

By Pastor Steve Snipstead

hat is India? India is everything. India is masses of people and a deserted beach. India is

beautiful happy children and crippled beggars. India hits you in the face with sights, sounds and smells. The unexpected is around every corner. Just when you think you understand, another surprising layer is ready to confront you. India is a man driving an oxcart while talking on a cell phone. India is everything.

I went to India with a purpose. My job was to equip pastors, specifically, to teach history, Christian history. Knowledge of history is important for ministry. Without history, ministry lacks perspective. Without history, we start thinking our situation is unique or that we know all there is to know. But every problem and issue we face has a history. When we see our situation from an historic perspective, we gain a detachment that helps us chart a wise course for the future. In the United States, some doubt the value of history. but not in India. Indian culture claims to be the oldest in the world, and they may be right. The pastors in my class knew the

value of the past, and they were eager to learn.

The AFLC-India is only a couple of decades old. It numbers 40 or more churches with at least that many pastors and Bible women. (Bible women lead a group of Christians where there is no pastor.) The church is growing rapidly and needs more leaders. The AFLC is assisting the Indian church by providing training and resources, but language, culture, and distance are barriers.

Teaching through a translator, the current practice for training pastors in India, has its limitations. The lan-



ABOVE: Pastors Steven Snipstead and **Connely Dyrud (back)** are pictured with Bible women and men in India. They taught pastoral training classes this winter in India as a part of a six-year program to train church leaders.

LEFT: Pastors Perly Ratna Raju and Pallekonda Yesupadan lead a service.



guage situation is unique. I've heard estimates that there are between 300 and 1,600 languages and dialects spoken in India. Hindi is supposed to be the national language, but after 250 years of British rule, English is the real trade language of India. All of the better elementary and secondary schools and almost all of the universities teach in English.

This language situation poses a unique problem for

See INDIA, page 22

[Chaplaincy]

Evangelism Tof LOVE

s a hospital chaplain, I believe responding to people's needs is the most genuine and effective witness to those in crisis situations. I call it evangelism of love. It means meeting people where they are at with the love of God, which enables us to give hope to His hurting children.

Think of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), who did not concern himself with a wounded man's race or differing theological understanding. The Samaritan

saw a child of God in need, and despite the cultural norms, he responded by lovingly meeting those needs.

What does it mean for us? Sometimes it means just being there for people in need. Often it means listening and enabling them to express and sort through what they are feeling. Other times it means comforting them in a loss. If they should request prayer, respect them by asking them what they want you to pray about. But don't use your prayer as a way of preaching at or imposing your beliefs on them.

There are many people today without any religious background. Often they are resistant toward religion. They expect that anyone connected with religion will be judgmental and try to push their views on them. The best way to minister to them may be simply to show them respect; then, if and when they allow it, care for their needs. You may never even mention God to them. Instead, allow them to see that a religious person can accept them as they are. Allow them to dictate what kind of relationship you have with them. Over time they may become more open to hear what you have to say, but only if you earn it by showing God's unconditional love for them.

There are also many people who have a religious background but no present church affiliation. Some of

them are people with a strong personal faith, but for whatever reason, they are no longer part of a local congregation. I find that many of them have been hurt by their church. They are alienated from the Church, perhaps partly because of their own faults, but often because of church fights, misguided policies, legalistic attitudes, cliques, slights and such. Many have just been forgotten and neglected when they became too sick to attend or too poor to give. I am amazed at the number of wounded souls there are out there.

We must meet them where they are, and listen to their pain and anger. Perhaps there can be some reconciliation with their former churches.

More importantly, we have the opportunity to assure them of God's love for them, regardless of how other people treat

People of various non-Christian religions also enter our hospitals: Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. There are people who come in with family issues, financial concerns, emotional problems, addictions, or mental disorders. But evangelism of love works for all. Accept and respect people as they are: loved by God. Then, with the love God provides, meet their needs. Let the Holy Spirit take care of the results.

them.

Pastor Don Vorhees
 St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran
 Dannebrog, Neb.

our work in India. The pastors and Bible women in the AFLC-India are from a wide variety of educational backgrounds. A few have graduated from university; they read and understand English well. Some are barely literate and read only their native language of Telegu. Most are somewhere in-between. Telegu is a language spoken by more than 80 million people, but there are relatively few books written in the language because of the wide use of English. Resources for Lutheran pastors in Telegu are scarcer still. By the time a pastor graduates from university and reaches seminary his classes are taught in English, and there is no need for Telegu books. But most of the AFLC-India pastors read only Telegu. Solving this dilemma is a priority for the Indian church.

Sending pastors to teach through translators once a year for two weeks is good, but the need for leaders is outpacing the current training program. The ultimate solution is a Telegu language Bible school and seminary. But how do you start a Bible school without trained teachers?

I wasn't sure when I left for India why I was chosen for this trip, but I began to see that God had prepared me for this situation in so many ways. The issues and subjects I've been led to study and teach in recent months in our church were exactly what they need in India. Most important, earning my doctorate gave me experience with distance learning, exactly the kind of program they need in India. It may turn out that what I learned in those four years will not be as important as how I learned it. It is my prayer that in the days ahead we will develop a more comprehensive distance-learning program for pastoral leadership in India. This project will need to wait on approval by the World Mission Committee. I don't know where it will lead, but I know something got started on this trip, something that will lead to many people following Christ in India.

Snipstead is pastor of Faith Free Lutheran in Kalispell, Mont.

MARCH AFLC Memorials

AFLBS

Mattie Copes (2) Stanley Carlson (5) Johnny Herset Earl Carlson

AFLTS

Elden Nielsen Arrabelle Meyer (2) Stanley Carlson (2) **Home Missions**

Stanley Carlson Mrs. Stegeman Betty Wallin

Miriam Infant Home

Carolyn Dyrud Cecil Schmidt

Parish Education

Marilyn Christiansen

Vision

Charlie Anderson Alice Judson Ann Stegeman **World Missions** Harold Bover Stanley Carlson (2) Donald Cooper

Marilyn Christiansen Mrs. Stegeman

Arlene Register

WMF

Alice Thompson

... in honor of

Miriam Infant Home

Connely Dyrud

AFLC seeks business manager

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee are seeking a general fund business manager. The position may be full- or parttime. If you or someone you know are interested in the position.

contact Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC vice president, at (763) 545-5631.

Please feel free to pass on the contact information to possible applicants.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (3 months) - January 1 - March 31, 2006

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN MARCH	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
-				
General Fund	\$325,700	\$28,721	\$84,089	26
Youth Ministries	57,949	6,612	15,630	27
Evangelism	98,330	6,820	17,666	18
Parish Education	96,477	5,913	23,895	25
Seminary	189,224	20,072	45,117	24
Bible School	296,257	28,095	67,576	23
Home Missions	293,287	14,810	45,852	16
World Missions	260,933	17,116	52,193	20
Personal Support	376,641	30,054	95,306	25
TOTALS	\$1,994,798	\$158,214	\$447,324	22
TOTALS 2005	\$1,860,474	\$179,120	\$472,793	25
Goal 25%				

These are the Annual Conference-approved budgets but do not reflect all the financial needs of the departments. Contact the individual departments for further information.

[Editorial]

With words, & actions

teve Duin, a columnist for "The Oregonian" newspaper recently told of some comedians who thought they would make a movie mocking Jesus. They spent several weeks studying the Bible, thinking they would find material for a variety of gags. But a funny thing happened: they found nothing to mock.



Craig Johnson

Instead they became impressed with Jesus.

But they weren't all that impressed with some of Jesus' followers, and neither is Duin. He writes, "Why do so many of the wrong

guys have the microphone? How can people meet Jesus if they're terrified of his 'bodyguards'? Why are so many believers taking refuge in mega-churches rather than soup kitchens, in country clubs for the rich not hospitals for the poor?"

We who follow Christ have to humbly admit at times we do provide material for comedy teams rather than helping people meet basic needs. Sometimes instead of introducing people to Jesus we get in the way. As Duin states, "Believers are too easily distracted by utterly superficial issues. Nonbelievers are consoled by the laziest Christians, not challenged by the best."

That same issue of "The Oregonian" had an article about a couple who have started feeding hungry people out of their garage. Each morning, five days a week, yearround, they go to area stores and collect donated food, paper products,

shampoo, toothpaste and soap. They sort it and in the afternoon hand it out to people who come by. It is a simple but effective means of demonstrating the love of God.

The news article and the column point to two key components of effective evangelism. First, we need to live out our faith. If we're going to talk the talk, we need to walk the walk. Secondly, our calling is to point people to Jesus. The comedians were surprised and impressed when they read the Gospels. As they studied Jesus they found Him to be fascinating, inspiring and somebody they wanted to know more about.

That is the kind of thing that happens when people meet Jesus. Lives are changed. If we try to impress people with who we are and what we have done it will meet with disaster. Jesus is the One who is truly impressive.

If our lives don't correspond with our message our efforts at evangelism will be ineffective. "Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (I John 3:18, NIV).

It is not enough, though, to simply live a good life and think people will figure out the good news of Jesus that way. "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). The message is so incredible and so different from anything else, it must be communicated and verbalized for it to be understood. If our lives, however, show a lack of love, people may have no interest in hearing the message.

On the other hand, love, humility, faithfulness and integrity can

If we try to impress people with who we are and what we have done it will meet with disaster. Jesus is the One who is truly impressive.

create interest in hearing the message. It did in the early Church. In the Roman Empire newborn babies were frequently unwanted. The early Christians would hide under bridges and catch discarded babies that people flung over the side like trash. The Christians would take the babies home and love and care for them. This happened so often that the Romans said of those early Christians, "They love our own more than we do." As people saw how the Christians lived and loved they got interested in hearing what they had to say.

The early Christians were described as "... enjoying the favor of all the people." They were living out their faith. "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). They were faithful in doing what God called them to do and loving as He showed us to love. It resulted in lives being changed and the Lord drawing people into the kingdom. We serve the same Lord who can do the same kind of work in our day.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

[Building the Base]

Leading Questions

M

ay I ask you a question? Maybe that is too formal for our 21st century American conversation. In fact, do we even ask permission to ask someone a question these

days? Not very often. What happens when we do ask permission? Permission is almost always granted. I have been unofficially keeping track for the last ten years, ever since Jesus' use of questions in His ministry first stood out to me while I was in seminary. Do you know what my unofficial study has found? One hundred percent acceptance! That is, everyone I have posed the question to has accepted.

Could that be why our Lord Jesus used questions so much?

I recently walked through the Gospel of Mark with an eye for a certain situation. I tried to look for each time Jesus was directly asked a question. What do you think He did?

Not counting His trial before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:53-65) and before Pilate (15:1-5), during which He testified to His deity or remained silent, Jesus consistently had one of two replies: a Scripture passage or a question.

"What did you say?" you may wonder. "The reply of God's Word fits for God's Son, but why would Jesus ask a question to answer a question?"

As I read through Mark, I noticed that Jesus used questions to get people to look beyond the initial question, to address the heart issue. With the crowds and individuals, our Savior shifted attention with questions by pointing to the truth of God's Kingdom over man's kingdom plans (2:18-20; 10:17-22). With the Pharisees and religious leaders, the King of Kings underscored with questions the importance of a living relationship

with the Lawgiver over worthless proud attempts at self-righteous works (2:23-28; 10:1-5; 11:27-33). The Light of the world illumined lives by asking questions, and sharing Himself. If we are going to be a light, shouldn't we learn from the Light?

When you hear the term "evangelism," what comes to your mind? Sweaty palms? Stumbling words? Missed opportunities?

Would it be different if we connected evangelism with conversation? Would it be different if we were ready to ask questions about spiritual truths? Then listen and respond.

Should we have our answer ready for the hope that we have in us? Absolutely! But let's allow the Lord to work through our questions that address a person's core beliefs. Then let us direct them to the biblical truths of a personal relationship with Jesus, heaven and hell, sin and grace.

I recently had an opportunity to share Christ with a man. He was comfortable in his misguided, unbiblical beliefs. I asked questions. He answered them. I shared God's truth. He listened. As of today, he hasn't asked Jesus into his heart, but he has heard the gospel. I am convinced — based on Jesus' ministry — that he heard, in part, because I asked first.

Now, open this issue for more tools on evangelism, and each time you begin sharing Jesus, think first: "May I ask you a question?"

Pastor Jason Holt
 Calvary Free Lutheran
 Fergus Falls, Minn.