

5 Easy Things You Can Do to Help Us Save Souls in 2009

Franklin Church of Christ
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Introduction:

Imagine driving on I-65, but the traffic has come to a standstill. You roll down your window and look ahead, craning to see what is going on. Is it just a bottleneck? Has there been a wreck? If so, how bad. As you strain to see, you hear sirens. Over the next few minutes an ambulance, a couple of fire trucks and several police cars pass you on the shoulder. You are beginning to worry. "I wonder if it's serious. I hope no one was injured." After a few minutes, the traffic starts to slowly move. Everyone is directed into the far lane and you are approaching the flashing lights. The vehicles come in to view; the wreck was brutal. You know someone has been hurt, possibly killed. You don't recognize the cars. EMTs are pushing someone on a stretcher to the back of an ambulance. You see the neck brace and lots of blood. In one of the cars, you see the firemen busily working to free someone who lies motionless and bloodied hunched over the steering wheel. Then you are past. You drive to your destination, thankful for your safety. On the news later that evening, you learn someone whose name you don't recognize from Knoxville was passing through Franklin and died in a fatal car wreck on I-65. How do you feel? What do you think about? Do you think about their soul?

Consider the same story, same traffic jam, same wreck, same experience as you drive by. However, when you got to work the next day one of your co-workers shared that the deceased was their aunt and uncle. How do you feel? What do you think about? Do you think about their soul?

Back up and consider the same story, same traffic jam, same wreck. However, this time as you pass by, the car looks vaguely familiar. You can't place your finger on it, but you're sure you've seen it before. You strain to recognize the victims, but the blood and the workers block your view. You get home and on the news, you discover someone living in your subdivision died in an auto accident on I-65. How do you feel? What do you think about? Do you think about their soul?

Back up and consider the same story, same traffic jam, same wreck. However, this time you do not vaguely recognize the car. You know exactly whose car it is. It is your next-door neighbor or perhaps it is a co-worker you ate lunch with yesterday. You strain to see the victims, wondering if they are hurt. All you can see are bloodied and lifeless bodies trapped in cars or strapped to stretchers. How do you feel? What do you think about? Do you think about their soul? What if they were not in Christ?

Finally, back up and consider the same story. The same traffic jam. The same wreck. This time you see the car and your heart freezes. You know that car. It belongs to your aunt or uncle or your cousin, or perhaps it is a grandparent. Maybe it's your mom or dad. Maybe it's your brother or sister. Maybe it's your husband or wife. Maybe it's your children. How do you feel now? What do you do? What do you think about? Do you think about their soul? What if they were not in Christ?

Everybody on earth, including everyone we know, work with, live near and love are a heart's beat away from this scenario. When we talk about church growth, as we did in our recent meeting with Harold Comer, we're not talking about some competition with other churches to see who can get the most members. We're not talking about filling pews or packing church buildings. We're talking about souls. When we see our family, friends and co-workers. We need to see that car wreck. What are we doing to help prepare them for that car wreck?

To follow up on our meeting with Harold Comer, I just want to share 5 very easy things we can all do to start helping people prepare for their car wreck, cancer, heart attack or whatever might be their end. No doubt there are many more things we can do, but here are 5 things all of us can do and can do right now, this week to start helping people prepare.

Discussion:

I. Pray

- A. According to **Acts 11:21**, many people in Antioch turned to the Lord because the Lord's hand was with the church. If folks are to turn to the Lord in Middle Tennessee, we need to ask the Lord to have His hand with us. Also remember **Ephesians 3:20** says God can do far more abundantly beyond all we ask or think by His power working in us. We need to pray big prayers.
- B. We need to pray for us. We need to pray for us as Paul requested prayers in **Ephesians 6:19-20**. We need to pray that we have opportunities to teach. We need to pray that we know what to teach. We need to pray that we may have boldness to teach.

- C. At the same time, we need to pray for the lost around us as Paul prayed in **Romans 10:1**. In this verse, Paul was praying for his fellow Jews. They had zeal but not according to knowledge. His heart's desire and prayer was for their salvation. We need to pray for the salvation of our family, friends, co-workers, neighbors.

II. Let Your Light Shine

- A. According to **Matthew 5:14-16**, we are to be the light of the world, to let our light shine so others may see our good works and glorify God. **I Peter 2:12** demonstrates we need to shine our lights even when non-Christians are mistreating us. Instead of getting vengeance, we need to turn shine our lights. In that way, they may repent and glorify God in the day of visitation.
- B. Shining our light simply means living our faith purposefully and obviously. As others see our lives, they will be intrigued and know they can turn to us for spiritual help when they are interested. They will be much more likely to listen when we pass on spiritual wisdom. As we shine our lights, let **Galatians 5:22-23** be our guide. When those in the world see us face enemies, struggles, trials and troubles with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control they will want what we have in Christ.
- C. I have no doubt, most of us are saying, "I thought you said 5 easy things." Living the Christian life all the time is not easy. It is a struggle and growth process. I list it simply because it is not something extra. It is something we should be working on anyway. As we live for Christ, we are doing one of the greatest things we can to help get the gospel message out.
- D. I'd like to make three caveats about this point before we move on.
1. First, I once heard someone say, "You need to let your light shine, not shine your own light." That was the Pharisees' problem. They were shining their own light. Remember that the major part of the Christian light is personal humility. If you go around looking down your nose at everyone, talking about how stupid everyone else is or acting like everyone else is beneath you because of how righteous you are, you won't turn anyone to God.
 2. Second, when talking about letting your light shine, that doesn't mean being perfect. There is only one Jesus. Shining our light means letting people see us change and grow as we draw closer to Christ. It means making amends when we do something wrong. Sometimes it means messing up badly, but letting people see we can turn to Christ for strength. If you get the humility down that I just spoke about, others won't see hypocrisy when you mess up. They'll see Jesus' forgiveness.
 3. Third, if you're saying, "I just can't do this because I don't feel joy and peace." Please don't walk away feeling guilty. Let's get together some time to talk about how you personally can gain the joy, love and peace that come from being in Christ.

III. Invite to our assemblies and classes

- A. Harold presented a great point about invitations on Monday night as he presented the 9 levels of invitation. If you missed that lesson, I encourage you to go to download it from our website and listen to it. If you were here for that lesson, I encourage you to download it from our website and listen to it again. I recognize that **Revelation 22:17** is not directly about inviting our friends and co-workers to the assemblies or classes of a local church. Rather, it is an invitation to come to Jesus and drink the living water from Him. At the same time, I think we recognize that the folks we often will have the most opportunity to make that invitation to are the ones who have first checked us out in our assemblies and classes. So, let's invite them to come.
- B. Remember what we learned from brother Comer about invitations. We can increase their curiosity by simply asking them to come and check things out for themselves. We can increase the invitation to a value statement by pointing out the spiritual value of what we're doing. We can talk about the peace that comes from a relationship with Christ. We can talk about the knowledge we gain from the preaching and teaching. We can talk about the family relationship.
- C. The number one religious change group in our nation is young families with small children. Learn the benefits of our children's classes so you can tell your friends about them. We have an awesome Bible class plan for our kids. Over the years they will learn so much of the Bible story, gaining an amazing grasp of the Bible's timeline and even the geography. Notice, I didn't say we have a perfect Bible class plan. There is no plan that is perfect. I know if you try, some of you

can point out things you don't like about our classes. You have to ask which is more important, getting this congregation to do classes the way you want, or talking about our classes in a way that will encourage your friends to check them out. Find things about our classes you can recommend and pass that along.

IV. Greet our guests

- A. It's always tough to bring up this point in an assembly, because we have guests present. I hope you have already been sufficiently made to feel at home before I started preaching this lesson so that you don't just think the attention you are shown when I'm done is only because people feel guilty after this lesson. At this point, I really only want to say keep up the good work to the brethren here. With few exceptions, the brothers and sisters help them feel welcome. To our guests, if you feel like you are an exception to that, please let me know.
- B. **James 2:1-4** talks about receiving guests into our assemblies. We need to show impartiality. We need to show honor. We need to show respect. We need to welcome them in and lift them up. Any church worth its salt will have some kind of program in which folks are assigned certain aspects of working with our guests. However, the congregation that grows is the one in which everyone is giving their first attention to guests whether they have an assignment or not. When this assembly is over, speak with a guest before you speak with a friend.
- C. We have a very significant opportunity most congregations don't. In the middle of our assembly we take a break. In those 10 minutes, we don't have to worry about getting out to head to lunch. Let's make those 10 minutes about greeting our guests and helping them feel welcome.
- D. Let's face it. Folks can see us as moral people and decide to check out what's going on in our congregation, but if they get here and are given a cold shoulder they won't come back or listen to what we have to teach them. You can help our guests prepare for their "car wreck" by helping them feel at home when they come in.

V. Recommend our website

- A. I know this one is a little different and I can't actually go to a verse that says, "Thou shalt look at the website." However, as we strive to fulfill **Mark 16:15**, we are going into all the world by using our website. Since November 23 (just two months ago) we have been monitoring our web traffic. We have had over 2500 visitors from 49 states and 52 countries.
- B. You can help by recommending our website to your friends, family, neighbors and co-workers. Consider some ways you can recommend the website. First, just send out an e-mail to your address book e-mail list letting everyone know about our new and improved website. Let them know it's a place where they can comment and give feedback on just about everything they read. Second, sign up for our e-mail feed by entering your e-mail into the spot at the top right of the website screen. Then when you receive entries you think will impact folks in your address book, forward it to them. Please, don't forward everything; then people will just get irritated. But if you believe a particular article or sermon will impact someone, forward it to them. By the way, if you have a prospect in mind and you know they are interested in a particular topic, just let me know and I'll make sure to put up an entry on that subject for you to forward. Third, pay attention to the spiritual discussions your contacts have, then search our website for entries that add to those discussions. At the bottom of each entry is a "share" button. Click it and then you can send a link to that particular article along with a note from you about it.
- C. Let's face it, the internet is the wave of the future. We can turn our website into a tool that will help save souls all over the world if we just work on recommending it. Not to mention, if local people are intrigued by our site, they will be much more likely to check us out and provide us opportunity to teach them.

Conclusion:

I realize these aren't the only things necessary in saving souls. However, these are 5 things that each and every one of us can do. They are things each and every one of us can do this week. As you do these things you are preparing your friends, family, neighbors, co-workers for their car wreck. You are also paving the way for your serenity as these folks face their car wreck. You will be able to take comfort knowing you did your part in helping prepare them. Let's all commit to these 5 things this week.