

Appendix A: Calling for Commitment

The Good Shepherd and the Abundant Life

John 10

Challenge is Inevitable

In post-modern evangelism, challenging our friends to faith is inevitable. They will not just fall in Christianity and become Spirit-filled disciples of Jesus without help. I have seen many people who were not challenged and never committed to faith. Or people who wanted to become Christians and were challenged so late, it wasted a half-year of growth. Helping our friends make the commitment of their lives is part of the package and at the core of what it means to be burning and shining lamps for Jesus.

Here are some thoughts about when and how to help our friends commit to Jesus:

When Do I Call To Faith?

Our friends do not have to dramatically experience multiple signs from God before they are ready to be called to faith. Here is the grid I use when calling to faith:

- They see Jesus in the word and respond at the spiritual level they are able
- They understand the gospel (I teach the Bridge diagram after the first couple Signs)
- They know that the gospel requires their obedience to Jesus in all areas of their life
- They know that the gospel requires a commitment to long term spiritual growth
- They know that they will need other followers to help them grow

The Role of the Prophet

I love to help my friends see the big picture. They need to know that Jesus is the Good Shepherd and has been proactively seeking them. I play the role of Prophet and connect all the dots for them. The Seven Sign series was not an accident. God has been seeking them through the study. Our friends will normally not be able to put together the grand picture of God drawing them to himself. We must overtly tell them.

Interpret the Joy of Obedience

It is important that our friends understand the life they are receiving from Jesus. At this point of challenge, I interpret for them the experience of following Jesus' commands. I teach them John 8:32 and that the disciples who continue in Jesus' words will be free. Hopefully at this point, they will have already experienced freedom through the study, in anxiety, provision, sexual purity, honesty, prayer, and I walk them through their own experience. I will tell them that they have tasted but an appetizer of the life that God has for them and they must take the next step of ordering the entrée.

Jesus Called for Commitment

Our friends must know that Jesus thinks so much of himself and the life he has for us, he will not settle for partial commitment. I introduce to them John 1 and Jesus calling the early disciples. Help your friends know that commitment is very normal and when we commit to Jesus, he commits to us. As C.S. Lewis penned, "If God didn't want us, we wouldn't be wanting God." Our friends do not believe God wants to be in relationship with them. They need to be convinced by us!

Commitment Analogies

Commitment can be a very scary word in our generation. I am always on the lookout for positive and fresh commitment illustrations to give to our friends a better understanding of commitment. For the past couple of years the two illustrations I have used are:

- **The Marriage Analogy**

I introduce the concept of Jesus as the Great Bridegroom (Isaiah 54, John 3 and John 4). Jesus is not interested in dating, he wants marriage. It is in marriage that the great transformation happens. Without that commitment, the love of God will stay on a very surface level. As we call of our friends for commitment, many are ready for marriage and need only the proposal. May we see ourselves as John the Baptist and be the best friend of the Bridegroom who rejoices at his voice (John 3:29)

- **The Coach Analogy**

Jesus is the Great Spiritual Coach. He is the One who wants to take us to the spiritual championship, but we must commit to his team and his ways. Each coach has their own philosophy for growth and development. Jesus' game book is the Bible. As we obey the coach and all of his commands, we will experience the great growth and success he promises. And Jesus is unlike any other coach in that he is the Coach who loves us and invites us to know him personally. He is the only Coach who is committed to us and especially loves to help us understand and grow from our failures. (For Laker fans, the dramatic turn around of the Lakers under Phil Jackson's leadership has been very helpful in communicating the coaching analogy).

These two analogies have proven helpful in communicating what it means to follow Jesus. Our friends must understand that Jesus is most serious about discipleship because that is the way to insure the freedom that we all long for.

Persuading to Follow the Good Shepherd

I will close the time and call for commitment with my friends from The Good Shepherd passage from John 10. I will highlight the numerous traits of Jesus and the blessings that are found being under his leadership. I am proactively persuading the person at this point to look at my own life and decide if I have made the right choice. I normally use two to three compelling illustrations from my own life about how the Good Shepherd has given me the abundant life as my husband or my coach. I will then look them in the eye and ask them what is keeping them from committing to follow the Shepherd. They will either commit to Jesus on the spot, have very legitimate issues they need to work through or have illegitimate fears that can be exposed and worked through on the spot. The more comfortable we become at this ministry of persuasion, similar to Paul in the marketplace daily (Acts 17:17), the more readily we will be able to see the open doors the Lord will give us during these monumental conversations!

First Steps of New Life

As the person has committed their life to Christ, I make it a point to encourage the following first steps of faith:

- Proactively and concretely rebel from all that is not of God and his teachings
- They should tell everyone they have decided to follow Jesus (John 9 – Sight Plan)
- Model and teach the new disciple to develop discipline in prayer, study of the Word
- Model and teach the new disciple concrete love for the poor
- Gather the disciple's family, the community of faith and the non-Christian friends to celebrate the new life – this is especially effective in a baptism ceremony, deepening the spiritual commitment of the new disciple
- Encourage the new disciple to lead a GIG of their own with all their friends!

The New Life

After the first week of commitment, I would also have a very honest discussion with the new disciple about the need for Christian community. As the GIG leader, you must be aware that the great inherent weakness in the GIG is that the person is unattached to the larger community of faith. It will be easy for them to have an amazing experience with God and then never commit to the local congregation of believers. I love to show them the model of Jesus and the 12 and point out that they have not only committed to Jesus, but also to his team (as weird as the team might be for them). All that you can do to help them get to know the other believers will be a great blessing for them and their long life of following the Good Shepherd!