

## Reaching Out To Religious People

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Have you ever noticed that the early Christians reached out to everyone, including people who were already religious? Today we hear about “churched” and “unchurched” folks. Scripture knows no such terms. Let us think in terms of saved and lost!

Peter and the other apostles preached to thousands of Jews in Acts 2. Who could deny that Jews who came to Jerusalem for a religious feast day were religious? Paul acknowledged that the people of Athens were “*very religious*” (Acts 17:22). Someone says, “Yes, but the Athenians were pagans. It’s ok to evangelize them; but if people already believe in the true God, we should go elsewhere.” Let’s take a closer look.

We’ve already mentioned the Jews in Acts 2, but among those were participants in killing Jesus, so they definitely need conversion. Are there any other examples of sincere, godly believers in the true God? Shouldn’t we just leave them alone?

How about Cornelius? You’ll look long and hard to find anyone more sincere than Cornelius, “a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:2). But God sent him a preacher!

Then there is Lydia, who “*worshiped God*” and who met with other women on the Sabbath “*where prayer was customarily made*” (Acts 16:13-14). Who will challenge her sincerity or that she believed in the true God? Yet Paul told her of Jesus and led her to obedience to the gospel!

Being “religious” doesn’t guarantee one is saved. Let us proclaim the good news to all who will listen!

## What Would Have Happened If . . .

...Noah had decided not to build the ark? Would he and his family have been saved, or would they have perished in the flood?

...Abraham just didn’t feel like leaving Ur? Would he have become the “father of many nations”?

...Moses had decided that leading the children of Israel out of Egypt was going to be too big a job for him to handle? Would he have gone back to the “pleasures of sin”?

...Elijah had not challenged the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel? Would he have been considered a faithful prophet of God?

...Naaman had not followed Elisha’s servant’s instructions to dip seven times in Jordan? Would he have been healed of his leprosy?

...Paul had resisted the call of God to be an apostle? How long would it have taken to get the gospel “into all of the world”?

...21st Century Christians refused to get involved in the work of the church? Would anything ever get done? Would our children grow up to be strong Christians, taking their place in the leadership and work of the church? Would the gospel be taken into local communities so the lost could believe and obey?

One of the leading factors in the success or failure of any congregation is the level of membership involvement. We cannot put the burden of work on the elders, deacons, preacher or Bible School teachers. We cannot sit back and believe that “someone else will do it”. If the church is to grow, mature, gain strength, and be strong in the future, all of us MUST be involved in its work.

What would happen if...the work of the church depended solely on you?

--Gary Knuckles (via *Bulletin Gold*)

## Good Addiction

*“Now I urge you, brothers – you know the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints – be subject to these, and to every fellow worker and laborer”* (1 Corinthians 16:15, 16).

Nobody in Corinth was a Christian before Stephanas and his family. And what did that family think being a Christian was all about? They “*devoted themselves to the service of the saints.*” As the KJV puts it, they “*addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.*” Nobody had to beg them to do good works. They served and served to the point of exhaustion but never wanted to stop.

Is that the way you think about service?

Take note that “service” and “ministry” and “servant” and “minister” are interchangeable terms. Nobody is a minister without being a servant. And everybody who serves is a minister. The lines drawn in religion between ministers and the rest of the church are unbiblical in that regard. Some of the best ministers would never claim that label or have it applied to them by other people. Their work may not get much attention. But God knows who they are, and His work in the church and in the world depends on them (Hebrews 6:10)

What should we do when we see such Christians? Be subject to them. Be like them. If they say they could use some help, jump in eagerly!

Who are some fellow-Christians you know who have this good addiction? “There is much to do; there’s work on every hand!”

--Danny Boggs (Neosho, MO) via *Old Paths*