



Evangelism: Part 3



WEEK THREE: MISSIONAL FRIENDSHIP

CASE THORPE: EPC MODERATOR

- EPC is not living up to where it should to be as a denomination.
- We need more adult professions of faith.
- Old models are not working. Are we willing to sacrifice for the future?





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FRIENDSHIP AND FAITHFUL PRESENCE



- The church's main objective is to be "faithfully present" in the world in which they find themselves located.

FRIENDSHIP AND FAITHFUL PRESENCE



- Churches can and should do mercy ministry. However, they should realize their primary objective is to worship God. Mission flows out of worship.

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FRIENDSHIP AND FAITHFUL PRESENCE



- I have asked many non-Americans what do Americans not do well. Most responses are friendship.
- Perhaps this is the key to church growth!

RPC AND FRIENDSHIP

- I believe I am picking a strength of our congregation. Therefore, I believe I am speaking our own language!



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RPC AND FRIENDSHIP

- But perhaps we need to make friends with people that are not part of our church?



RPC AND FRIENDSHIP

- Missional friendship is one of the best ways to be a “prophetic witness” in the world for Jesus Christ.



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AMERICA AND FRIENDSHIP



- The *New York Times* ran an article: “Why is it so hard to make friends over 30?”
What did they find?

AMERICA AND FRIENDSHIP



- Interviews cast friendship in consumeristic language: age-segregation, sex-segregation, and grading potential friendships on a scale of 1-10. Truly horrific, if you ask me!

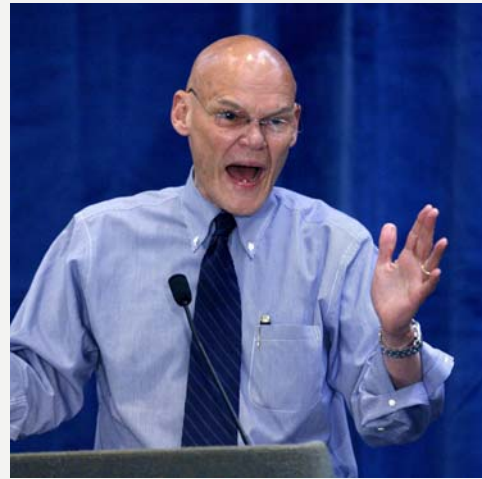
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AMERICA AND FRIENDSHIP



- Is friendship shaped by consumeristic practices?

"IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS, STUPID." EVANGELIST JAMES CARVILLE



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THE FIFTEEN PERCENT AND FRIENDSHIP

- People who do not have extensive social networks are more likely to join a church. Sociology teaches us this truth.



THE FIFTEEN PERCENT AND FRIENDSHIP

- Who are these fifteen percent in Erie? Immigrants (skilled and non-skilled), job transplants, and retirees.



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THE FIFTEEN PERCENT AND FRIENDSHIP

- Perhaps the harvest is ripe for RPC to intentionally look for these people in our neighborhoods.



THE FIFTEEN PERCENT AND FRIENDSHIP

- I have witnessed all of these categories manifest themselves at the Cherry Hill Apartments where Sara, Zoe, and I live.



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APOSTLES AND FRIENDSHIP



- The Apostles had a strategy to build relationships with people.

APOSTLES AND FRIENDSHIP



- Acts 14:1-7 — Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.

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APOSTLES AND FRIENDSHIP



- Acts 14:1-7 (*continued...*) — ³ So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. ⁴ But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles.

APOSTLES AND FRIENDSHIP



- Acts 14:1-7 (*continued...*) ⁵ When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, ⁶ they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, ⁷ and there they continued to preach the gospel.

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WHAT IS MISSIONAL FRIENDSHIP?

- RPC's Session has voted to approve an "English Club" for moms in the future.



WHAT IS MISSIONAL FRIENDSHIP?

- If we are successful in drawing in people, do not be surprised if the pastor asks you to adopt someone as your friend.



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WHAT IS MISSIONAL FRIENDSHIP?

- We do not get to pick church members (doctrine of election).



PICKING MISSIONAL FRIENDS

- Studies have shown that we become friends with people ten years older and ten years younger.



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PICKING MISSIONAL FRIENDS

- I would argue, based on sociological data, that people who are new to Erie are perfect candidates. They do not have social networks.



PICKING MISSIONAL FRIENDS

- Immigrants in Erie often make the best candidates. Moreover, they are typically socially conservative.



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PICKING MISSIONAL FRIENDS

- Example: Abdullah came to Zoe's baptism. However, he left Radius and Erie because he could not make friends outside of his racial background.



PICKING MISSIONAL FRIENDS

- Example: Asians, who spend over a year in a church, convert over 95 percent of the time.



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PASTORAL CHALLENGE

- In order for us to grow as a congregation, it is going to be done primarily through friendship.



PASTORAL CHALLENGE

- Do not make decisions for people! I cannot stress the importance of this truism! We are not God. He is the One who saves and builds His church.



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PASTORAL CHALLENGE

- Sacrifice some of your current friendships for the sake of the kingdom of God. Meet new people!