

## “COME TO US” OR “GO TO THEM”

Too many of us still think the best way to win people is by inviting them to our already-established church, to join us where we are because we have something good for them there. This seems to be the thinking behind most of our efforts to create a welcoming, inoffensive, full-service experience for them once they arrive. This is the “*Come To Us*” approach.

But that’s not the way Jesus fulfilled His mission, and it’s not how He intends for us to fulfill ours. He completely left where He was in order to mingle with us here. And He now commands us to assert ourselves in a similar way, to leave our familiar surroundings and meet with others where they are. The attitude we need if we’re going to succeed is, “I’ll come join you. Let’s start something with the people you know and care about.” This is a “*Go To Them*” approach.

Going to them is first about leaving our womb-like sanctuaries to connect with unchurched people on their turf. But it’s even *more* about where we *continue* to meet with them once they indicate an interest in Jesus. Do we bring them back to our mother ship and quickly wean them away from their non-Christian friends and surroundings? Or do we build something new with them, right where we found them? Jesus and His apostles favored the latter approach in almost every case. They emphasized extending God’s evangelistic enterprise through starting new churches, not just by feeding people back into churches that were already established.

## HOW TO “GO TO THEM”

How does assertive, “Go To Them” evangelism fit-in as one of the four essential activities we should be preoccupied with when we gather as a church? In one of three ways.

1. One answer is that we should use a sizeable portion of our time together for planning and conducting outreaches *as a group*. Much has been written about the value of whole-church projects and bridge-building functions designed to serve and bless the community in Jesus’ name. Many have reported wonderful results from these activities, not the least of which includes demolishing their own fortress mentality. But such programs are usually calculated to raise the visibility of already-existing churches, not to start new ones. They *begin* as “Go to Them,” but their ultimate aim is “Come to Us.” Outreach programs are a really good approach to consider if the focus can stay resolutely on starting new groups and churches with their receptive contacts.
2. Another answer is that we should divide our current churches into smaller groupings that meet in different neighborhoods so they will be accessible to more people in more locations. Coupled with diligently making and inviting new friends in those neighborhoods, this strategy can be very effective *if* the Christians remain willing to divide again once their group reaches a certain size, probably somewhere between 12-20. They just have to agree from the start that reproduction is a vital part of why they exist. This is a terrific, movement-spawning strategy that should be widely promoted.
3. A third method involves individuals and teams prayerfully going out and starting spiritual discussions or Bible studies that can grow into new churches. This harmonizes well with the Bible’s descriptions of a mission entrusted to we who are now following the apostles’ examples. It also embodies assertive, “Go to Them” evangelism and disciple-making. A detailed explanation of this multi-step process is included in the Assertive Evangelism Supplement at the end of this chapter.

This third approach concentrates almost entirely on believers building relationships and sharing their faith *outside* of church. In what way can it be seen and included as one of four essential activities for us when we’re *gathered*? Mostly by making time when we’re together for telling each other about new prospects and contacts, praying for them, praying for each other, telling exciting stories about what God is doing, telling other stories about getting stumped or rejected and encouraging each other to faithfulness as Christ’s representatives in the world.

Our times together are also perfect for training exercises like rehearsing the elements of the basic gospel, mastering strategic portions of Scripture (like Romans 3:19-26 and 6:23), practicing how to share our testimonies (salvation stories), working through answers to challenging questions, problem-solving the situations and objections that stymie us and providing whatever support is needed for new Bible studies and church plants once they get going.

Other ideas include agreeing as a group to read and discuss a good book on evangelism, or going through a training workshop together. There are some really good ones on video, but an even better idea is to schedule a live training and make an event out of it. Write me and I’ll tell you more about a good one that can be tailored to your needs.