

Is This The Way To Reach The Lost?

by Wayne Goff

A large local Baptist church mailed some material to the meeting house of the Park Forest congregation in Baton Rouge, Louisiana while I was working with them. In it was a letter addressed to “Dear Youth Minister/ Worker.” Don’t look for that in the New Testament. It isn’t there. The letter stated: “Our church has taken a major leap forward in our emphasis towards reaching lost students with the gospel. We are hosting what we pray will be ‘An Awakening’ for our area. We have been involved in forty days of prayer and fasting for God to move in a supernatural way. We have spared no expense for the week and encourage and urge you to attend and bring your lost students with you.”

All of this struck me as very odd. Of course all the lost, or anyone who is lost, must be reached with the gospel, “*God’s power unto salvation*” (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18). I didn’t know exactly who our “lost students” were to whom they were referring, whether young people who were school students among our members’ families or young people who were attending our Bible classes (“Sunday School” to them), but who had not been saved. (Surely they were not Bible class students that we had lost because they quit attending, and we didn’t know where to find them. We could hardly bring those lost students anywhere.) A church and its members should be concerned about reaching any and all who are lost with the soul-saving gospel of Christ (Mk. 16:15-16; 1 Thess. 1:8). And a church ought to be able to reach its own “lost students” with the gospel. No one congregation has the obligation or right to do this for other congregations. For a congregation that is supposed to be “independent” (Baptists believe in local church autonomy), this congregation certainly seemed too eager to violate the autonomy of others.

As for the fasting, it did not seem to be anything like the fasting of Jesus in Luke 4:2 (He ate nothing for forty days), and it certainly did not meet the standards that Jesus Himself set for fasting in Matthew 6:16-18 (a very personal and inconspicuous thing). And they wanted God to move in a supernatural way in this effort to save their and other’s “lost students.” There is nothing supernatural about saving the lost with the gospel (read about the conversions in the book of Acts). If the saved will teach the lost the gospel, the lost can thereby be saved. It is marvelous and wonderful and possible because of the love, grace and mercy of God, but not supernatural. Had the angel or the Holy Spirit taught Cornelius and those at his house or the Ethiopian eunuch as he rode in his chariot, instead of sending Peter to teach them in the first case and Philip to teach him in the second case, that would have been supernatural.

And what did this ambitious and zealous (Rom. 10:2) church propose to use in “reaching lost students with the gospel”? Well much of the expense they were unwilling to spare was to go toward “a bungee run, joust, obstacle course, food, door prizes and much, much more.” If this is how a church or any churches reached lost souls in the first century according to the inspired record found in the New Testament, I have been unable to find it. But, of course, New Testament churches didn’t have “youth ministers” or “ministers to students” to think up such gimmicks. If you are looking for a church that seeks to follow the New Testament, please check out the **church of Christ that meets at 6403 N.W. Roanridge Road in Kansas City, Missouri.**

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