

A Fellow Worker

by Berry Kercheville

Euodia and Syntyche were women whom Paul said, “*labored side by side with me in the gospel...together with the rest of my fellow workers*” (**Philippians 4:2**). It might be difficult for us to understand exactly how these women worked with Paul, but I was blessed to have Bernice Boyes show me how women can be fellow workers in the gospel.

Imagine what it would be like for an inexperienced, 22-year old to work with a well-seasoned 54 year old woman. At my young age, I knew “some scriptures.” My Dad had done an excellent job of teaching me the Old Testament story and had tested me well in the differences between scriptural and unscriptural practices. But that was a far cry from actually knowing how to lead a person to Christ. It didn’t take long working next to Bernice for me to know that I was out of my league. Here was a woman who had single-handedly started a church in Panama, and therefore I knew I had to watch, listen, and learn. However, as experienced as Bernice was, she knew the importance of staying within her role as a woman, using her best talents in making contacts while urging me to develop my skills in teaching. She quickly and naturally took on a supporting role instead of trying to take control.

To illustrate, when we began a Bible study with an individual around a kitchen table, Bernice would situate herself close enough to me where I could see her notepad. As I taught, Bernice would jot down notes. She certainly didn’t need to take notes, but she did so for the sake of encouraging the person we were teaching. However, invariably a question would be asked that would stump me. I usually knew the answer but not the scripture to back it up. Bernice would never flinch but simply begin to write down the chapter and verse of key texts at the bottom of her notebook. I would discretely glance at her page and say something like, “To answer that question let’s turn over the 1 Peter 3:21.” If our seating arrangement was such that I couldn’t see her notebook, she might say, “Berry, what about this text in Romans 6, would that help?” At other times, when she detected that our friend was not understanding my explanation, she would say, “Could you go over that again? I want to make sure I’m following your point.” In each of these scenarios she was aid in teaching and at the same time giving me experience. That type of partnership is still valuable today. While I do not usually need someone to give me a chapter and verse, I love it when I have one or two Christian women in a study to ask questions and partner in the teaching process.

Setting Up Bible Studies

The most important partnership Bernice created was using her opportunities to invite people to a personal Bible study. Bernice kept a small notepad in her purse where she wrote down the names and phone numbers of every person she met. Every day she would go through her names and either make a phone call or a visit on one of her new contacts. Sometimes it was just to touch base and other times to ask for a Bible study. I would usually accompany her on visits only one time a week because of my need to study.

Her efforts in making new contacts made Monday mornings a tradition I desperately miss. The phone would ring and as soon as I answered she would say, “Got your pencil ready?” Then she would give me the schedule of the classes I would be teaching that week. It would go something like this: “Today at one, we have a class with a lady named Sally. She lost her husband last year and grew up Baptist but isn’t attending anywhere. Tonight at 7 we have a study with... Then tomorrow at 10 am... Tomorrow at 2 and then tomorrow night at 7. On Wednesday we have studies at 11 and 3. On Thursday, we have a class at one, after which we will make a couple visits, then a class that night.” Of course,

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