

# *SOS Ministry Newsletter - July 2009*

## *Open Air Evangelism*

Dear Christian Friends,

Many Christians see no need for open air evangelism. They think the gospel should only be preached in church meetings and possibly evangelism crusades. Personal evangelism, if it is done at all, should be accomplished by developing friendships with individuals. We cannot talk with someone about Jesus until we have “earned the right to be heard.” (Jesus commanded us to preach the gospel. We don’t need to get permission from anyone else. But I do agree that we need to approach people in a polite and respectful manner.)

At the other extreme, a few Christians consider themselves to be radical street preachers. They preach mainly about the evil of sin (especially sexual sin) and the fires of Hell. Some will publicly rebuke women who pass by them on the streets, calling them “whores” because of their immodest dress. Some carry large signs with messages about Hell and offensive names for homosexuals.

In SOS Ministries, we find ourselves looking for a middle ground. Jesus was a street preacher. Much of His ministry involved the public proclamation of the gospel. Similarly, Peter, Paul, and the other apostles were also street preachers. However, many Christians today say that street preaching is not valid for 21st century America. In their opinion, non-Christians have so many negative attitudes towards street preaching that they can no longer be reached effectively this way. They think we need to find new, less offensive methods of reaching people.

I do think these Christians have a point. We cannot preach exactly the same way as Christians did 100 years ago. The gospel, of course, does not change. But we need to adapt our presentation so that we are effectively communicating with our audience. One example involves reading from the King James Bible. Jesus spoke in Aramaic, which was the common language of his day in Israel. The English language has changed a lot since the King James translation was made. Today, it seems antiquated and is difficult to understand.

But I think the changes need to go a lot farther. A few months ago, I was doing a study of New Testament preaching in this newsletter. We actually have very few examples of preaching to a gentile audience. One notable example is Paul’s preaching on Mars Hill in Acts 17. He refers to an altar that reads “to the unknown god” and quotes from Greek poets. Realizing that his audience had little or no understanding of the gospel, he started with a basic message about there being one God who created all things, and that we should not worship idols. He also spoke about repentance and judgment, but did so, I believe, in an extremely gentle and tactful way:

“The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent: Because he has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained, whereof he has given assurance to all men, in that he raised him from the dead.” (v.31)  
He did not say, “Unless you believe in Jesus, you will all burn in Hell, you rotten sinners.” His message was similar, but his approach and tone were quite different. I have preached the gospel on the streets of San Francisco for over 30 years. As people’s hearts become increasingly hardened to the gospel, we are tempted to respond harshly to them. Instead of doing this, I believe that we need to respond with more gentleness and love in our preaching. We need to come from a place of humility.

I also believe we need to give people a reason for our faith in Christ. Westerners are increasingly skeptical of our belief that the Bible is God's Word and Jesus is the only way to God. On May 30, we were at Dolores Park. When I offered a gospel tract to a woman, she asked me "Why do you believe that Jesus is the only way to God?" Perhaps she expected me to say that Jesus delivered me from drugs or that I feel His presence. She could easily have responded: "Krishna delivered me from drugs" or "I feel the presence of Buddha, and he gives me peace and joy." Instead, I told her about the Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. She was clearly surprised by my answer. She did not wish to talk further, but I gave her something to think about.

I do believe in one-on-one witnessing. I think it is important to share Jesus with our friends, and people we know. But not everyone has a Christian friend who is witnessing to him. Often, the public preaching of the gospel complements the witness of Christians. At Dolores Park, we witnessed to a woman who had Christian friends, and because of that was a bit more receptive to the gospel. Some people respond to public preaching, some to gospel tracts, others to one-on-one sharing. Often, God uses a combination of methods to bring someone to salvation.

A Facebook friend recently wrote me, "in America, it may soon become illegal to evangelize. (But hopefully, some Christians would still do it anyway, choosing to obey God rather than man, no matter the cost!) May we all remember that souls are at stake, and that Hell is a place we would not want our worst enemy to go to. Hell is real, and this is a spiritual war, and there are real casualties."

Many Americans gave their lives so that we would have freedom of speech and religion in this nation. I want to take full advantage of the freedom we have today, and bring the gospel to as many people as I can. I hope many of you will join me in this effort.

## **On the Streets**

On Saturday May 23, we held our first outreaches of the year in city parks. Richard Griffin ministered with us at Washington Square. Later that afternoon, Last Days Harvest Church from Sacramento ministered at Union Square. Quite a few members of their church witnessed with us, and many people were drawn by the music. Minh, originally from Vietnam, was listening to the band play "Holy of Holies." Loretta started talking with him. He wanted to know what the song was about. She shared with him about Christ's atonement. Minh had never heard the gospel before and was just trying to be a good person. He left with gospel tracts to read and said he would look up the Bible in Vietnamese online. Earlier, I mentioned the May 30 outreach at Dolores Park. We only got two permits at Dolores Park this year. This park, located between Mission and Castro Streets, has a variety of visitors. Most are liberal San Franciscans. Some are Hispanic and some are homosexual. On Tues. May 26, the California Supreme Court ruled that Proposition 8, which defines marriage as between a man and woman, was constitutional. Many homosexuals were extremely angry and blocked city streets in protest. We were concerned that angry homosexuals could disrupt our outreach at Dolores Park the following Saturday. A few people complained about our preaching. One person called the police and another tore down our signs and tried to run off with one sign. However, the park was relatively peaceful that afternoon. Paul Coca and Mark Whitehead played music, and several of us preached. We also passed out tracts and spoke with people in the park.

Eric and I spoke with a 27 year old man named Ricky. He had just gotten out of jail and said he was a Christian. He thanked God for delivering him from an addiction to meth. Then, he said he was homosexual and asked what we thought about that. We told him that the Bible said that it was sin, but that God could deliver him from it if he was willing to change. He said he loved the sex too much and would never give it up. Please pray for Ricky.

## Coming Events

Note: Outreaches are subject to change. Call (510) 531-5325 or 926-3299 (new cell phone) to confirm outreaches or for more information.

Friday July 3, 10 Witnessing in San Francisco neighborhoods. 7:30 - 10 PM

Sat. July 4 Fourth of July Outreach at Fisherman's Wharf, SF. 5-10 PM Call for exact location.

Sat. July 11 Washington Square out- reach 11:30 AM-1:30 PM Columbus & Union St. Union Square outreach Powell & Geary St. 3:30-5:30 PM.

## *SOS-San Francisco*

### **July 17-25, 2009**

SOS-San Francisco is an opportunity to get training and practical experience in evangelism. The experience you get during SOS week will help you become a bolder and more effective witness for Jesus in your everyday life.

Don't miss this year's SOS outreach. We have enclosed a card and registration form with this newsletter. As always, we waive the registration fee for those who cannot afford it.

This year we will again be meeting at Park Presidio Bible Church, 10th Ave. and Cabrillo, San Francisco. Registration begins on Friday July 17 at 6 PM. Meetings are scheduled daily except Sunday at 8 AM from July 18-25. If you live in the Bay Area and must work, you may join us at night and on weekends.

Please pray that God will bring many laborers, especially youth groups, to help us bring in a harvest this summer. We hope that many Christians who have participated in SOS outreaches over the past 30 years will join us, in addition to those who have never been to SOS. Every year, it seems, Christians become more caught up in worldly concerns and less interested in evangelism.

## **Ministry Needs**

Thank you again for your prayers and financial support for this ministry. Please pray that we would get the permits we have requested for SOS-San Francisco. We still have two openings in our Oakland ministry house. We are looking for men in their 20's or 30's who are spiritually strong, have administrative gifts, and are committed to evangelism. We need to train younger believers in evangelism – to reach a new generation and help us continue this work of evangelizing San Francisco and Berkeley.

Please pray that God will bring the right people for our house. Our CD of the Month is Worship and Spiritual Warfare by Chuck Girard. This is a teaching Chuck gave at an earlier SOS outreach, and includes some of his music. Chuck will be joining us for SOS once again this year.

I hope many of you will join us for SOS-San Francisco, July 17-25.

Yours in His love,

Larry Rosenbaum