

Dear Friend,

As you may remember, I spent many years working with Campus Crusade for Christ on three university campuses. I spent much of my time making contact with college students in order to share with them the basic gospel message. Over the years, as I grew as a Christian and grew in my understanding of the Scriptures my motivation and my method of evangelism changed. I don't have time to tell you all the wrong motives I had for sharing the gospel, nor do I have time to tell you all the wrong methods I used. What I'd like to do is explain one of the two primary biblical motivations for telling those who do not yet know Christ what Christ has done for all who trust in him.

In John 10:15b-16 Jesus says, "...I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice and there will be one flock and one shepherd." Then in John 11:51-52, the high priest, Caiaphas, declares to the Sanhedrin, who were debating what they should do about Jesus, "You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." The apostle John then inserts this editorial comment, "He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one."

According to these statements (and many others) Jesus has people whom he intends to save (He says, "I must bring them also.") whom are yet scattered throughout the people groups of the world. They are his "sheep", "the scattered children of God" who do not yet know they are sheep or children. There is no reason for us to suppose that among the 80,000 people who live within 8 miles of the center of Janesville that Jesus has no more sheep that he intends to bring into the pen. While Christ knows who these sheep are, we don't know. Therefore, how are we supposed to recognize them? (Especially this is difficult when some of those who are going to become sheep currently hate us. Take for an example the apostle Paul himself. I doubt that anyone would have predicted that this zealous Pharisee who was persecuting and imprisoning Christians was one of Christ's sheep.)

The answer to that question is given by Jesus in John 10:16, "They too will listen to my voice." Then in 10:27 he says, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." The sheep of Jesus are those who listen to his voice and follow him. Therefore, the way we discover whom the sheep are is for us to be Jesus, declaring the good news of the kingdom. We, the church, are the body of Christ and thus we announce the truth of the gospel so that the sheep of Jesus will hear his voice, by the work of the Spirit and come follow him.

This is how Paul describes his own apostolic work in Colossians 1:24-29 (which I will let you read) and 2 Timothy 2:10, "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus." The work of evangelism is like a military search and rescue mission. It is as if some of our comrades have been captured by the enemy and brainwashed that we, their friends are the enemy. We are

assigned the task of going behind enemy lines, at risk to ourselves, and rescuing them from their captors. Part of our liberation includes persuading them that they really are captives and we really are their friends. This we do through the preaching of the gospel.

Knowing that some of the people whom we rub shoulders with, including our own children, are going to become Christ's sheep gives us boldness and compassion: Boldness because we know that Christ will save his sheep, the gospel is going to bear fruit; compassion because we love our brothers and sisters and want them to be free from their willing captivity.

Ed Fruin and the Service and Outreach Team are currently working through ways for us to proclaim the gospel in our community. One opportunity that we have on October 2 is our Grand Opening. We are going to invite the community to join us for Sunday Worship in our new facility and then we will have a cookout following. This would be the perfect opportunity for you to invite your friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors to visit our new church building and check out our congregation. Let's do this together, praying that God would be pleased to call his sheep into his church through us.

Calling out with you,