



Who? Me? How could God use Me?

Recently, I had the privilege of sitting for some enlightening conversation with a new convert to Christianity. He was saved from an extremely wicked background. Though the change in his life was overwhelmingly obvious, his repeated comments were that he saw no way that he could be assimilated into "normal" church life, much less be used productively of God. All during our conversation, I kept thinking that there is a man in the Bible who came from an identical background.

In I Corinthians 6:11, Paul, who, himself, had been a murderer, encourages the Corinthian believers with the words, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." What they "were" is clearly delineated in verses 9 and 10. They had been fornicators, idolaters, thieves, practicers of homosexuality, etc. Sounds like to me they were a motley group. However, the difference is JESUS! "Such WERE some of you."

We, who grew up in good homes, and have attended church all our lives, sometimes have no concept of how someone "from the other side of the tracks" feels when they walk into our pristine church environment. They feel totally out of place, even after coming to Christ. It is up to us to encourage them, as Paul did the Corinthians, with the reality of how they, once saved and changed, can be used by God. I watched, with great delight, as the eyes of this new convert lit up with hope, as I told him of the reality of God's ability to use him to impact those from backgrounds like his. In fact, I said, "You will be able to reach some that I'll never be able to, BECAUSE of your background." God used Paul's religious, yet murderous background to impact "the Gentiles, and kings, and the nation of Israel." (Acts 9:15)

My encounter with this new convert underscored several things that the Lord has been, recently, stressing to me.

(1) We are not doing a good job reaching the REALLY lost. (That is, those who are wickedly lost and know it.) In fact, we don't seem interested in them, at all. Whether because we're intimidated by them or fearful of the embarrassment they might cause, we tend to avoid them altogether. Yet, these are the very ones Jesus seeks to save.

(2) We assume way too much from today's irreligious culture. We can't assume that people today know anything about Christianity or living a selfless life. Pleasing self is job one in contemporary society. We must teach, lead, and model the Christian life, vividly, before today's culture. That's the only way they will ever get it.

(3) We must go where lost people are in order to reach them. As never before, lost souls are not coming to church. I am all for doing whatever necessary to get them to church, but in reality, we must do much more than that if we are going to reach them. Neutral ground, like a tent, park, race track, or sports arena, are outstanding venues for 21st century evangelism. We must take advantage of these arenas.

Will you PRAY for God's wisdom and OBEY His prompting when it comes to aggressive evangelism in contemporary culture? A lost world, much of which has never heard, hangs in the balance!

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