

Reaching Generation –X

" Be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"(Acts 1:8). The command is clear. The task is huge, but simple: Get the Gospel message out to all who don't know Christ. But how do we communicate the Gospel to university students who may have no understanding of the basics of the Christian faith? They may tolerate religion as a private opinion as long as you don't make any claims for Christ as the way, the truth and the life.

The present mood is that all religions are the same. All religious views are considered of equal worth. No religion may ever be viewed as superior to another. This would be politically incorrect. And many students have no Christian background. If their parents are not committed Christians, and if they never attended either church or Sunday school, they have not been taught the Gospel. Years ago the average Canadian was acquainted with the Bible. Bible knowledge was taught and prayers were offered in the public school system, but this is no longer allowed. Students have heard about disgraced television evangelists and the abuse by Christian Brothers and formulated an opinion on Christianity on the basis of these lurid news stories. Consequently, they have rejected a faith of which they are ignorant. These people, who think they know what the Christian faith is all about but don't, are very hard to reach with the Gospel. Yet there is a renewed interest in "spirituality" on campuses. It betrays a hunger for meaning and significance that neither hedonism nor scientism, let alone postmodernism, can ever provide. And this gives the Christian a point of contact.

This is not a time for despair. The wisdom and the power of God through the Gospel (1 Cor. 1: 18-25) overcame the paganism and the pluralistic philosophies of the ancient Roman empire, and it can be a potent force today without us having to compromise its content. The Gospel is still "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Rom.1:17).

To be effective we must remain faithful to the fundamentals of our faith and back up our witness with godly living. This cannot be done without the spiritual discipline of regular Bible study and prayer, and exemplify the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5). We must make our every thought captive to the obedience of Scripture. Godly living helps us to live in our culture but not to be part of it. And we must be sensitive to students' needs, struggles, and beliefs. Do we know where they are hurting?

And what message do we bring on campus? Do we present a Biblical view of God? Or do we preach a God who will meet every need? Do we show a preference for the love of God over His holiness? Someone wrote that for modern Christians " God seems more like a Rogerian therapist who non-judgmentally sympathizes with us rather than a holy God who discomforts us." In our witness we can't presume that fellow students understand what you mean by God. When they hear you mention God, they may think that you are speaking of the new age god of Shirley MacLaine. They may not grasp what you mean by sin and salvation. We may have to begin with explaining the nature of God, the doctrine of creation, man's rebellion and fall into sin, the need for forgiveness and reconciliation, and

then introduce Jesus Christ, His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead for sinners' gain.

Being an authentic witness for Christ has never been easy. The apostle Paul, the greatest missionary of all time, suffered great hardships for the sake of the Gospel. Yet he kept on speaking and living for his Lord in the confidence that his work was not in vain (1 Cor.15: 58). And we have reason to be optimistic. God is still at work. All over the world people are coming to Christ. Even in North America there is still a hunger for God. St. Augustine said that people are restless until they find their rest in God. Douglas Coupland, who coined the term Generation X, spoke for some Xers when he wrote:

My secret is that I need God - that I am sick and no longer make it alone. I need God to help me to give, because I no longer seem capable of giving; to help me to be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me to love, as I seem beyond being able to love.

The task to reach the Generation X on campus is both an opportunity and a challenge. Make it yours.

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