



You Can Make a Difference In Someone's Life

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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AM Assembly



Introduction:

Imagine driving on I-74, but the traffic has come to a standstill. You roll down your window and look ahead, craning to see what is going on. Is it just a bottleneck? Has there been a wreck? If so, how bad? As you strain to see, you hear sirens. Over the next few minutes an ambulance, a couple of fire trucks, and several police cars pass you on the shoulder. You are beginning to worry. "I wonder if it's serious. I hope no one was injured." After some time, the traffic starts to slowly move. Everyone is directed into the far lane and you are approaching the flashing lights. The vehicles come in to view; the wreck was brutal. You know someone has been hurt, possibly killed. You don't recognize the cars. EMTs are pushing someone on a stretcher to the back of an ambulance. You see the neck brace and lots of blood. In one of the cars, you see the firemen busily working to free someone who lies motionless and bloodied hunched over the steering wheel. Then you are past. You drive to your destination, thankful for your safety. On the news later that evening, you learn a couple whose names you don't recognize from Louisville was passing through Indianapolis and died in a fatal car wreck on I-74. How do you feel? What do you think about? Do you think about their souls?

However, when you get to work the next day one of your co-workers shared that the deceased was his aunt and uncle. How do you feel? What do you think about? Do you think about their souls?

Back up and consider the same story, same traffic jam, same wreck. This time as you pass by, the car looks vaguely familiar. You can't place your finger on it, but you're sure you've seen it before. You strain to recognize the victims, but the blood and the workers block your view. You get home and on the news, you discover a couple living in your subdivision died in an auto accident on I-74. How do you feel? What do you think about? Do you think about their souls?

Back up and consider the same story, same traffic jam, same wreck. However, this time you do not vaguely recognize the car. You know exactly whose car it is. It is your next-door neighbor or perhaps it is a co-worker you ate lunch with the day before. You strain to see the victims, wondering if they are hurt. All you can see are bloodied and lifeless bodies trapped in cars or strapped to stretchers. How do you feel? What do you think about? Do you think about their souls? What if they were not in Christ?

Finally, back up and consider the same story, the same traffic jam, the same wreck. This time you see the car and your heart freezes. You know that car. It belongs to your aunt or uncle or your cousin, or perhaps it is a grandparent. Maybe it's your mom or dad. Maybe it's your brother or sister. Maybe it's your husband or wife. Maybe it's your children. How do you feel? What do you do? What do you think about? Do you think about their souls? What if they were not in Christ?

Everybody on earth, including everyone we know, work with, live near and love are a heart's beat away from this scenario. When we talk about church growth, we're not talking about some competition with other churches to see who can get the most members. We're not talking about filling pews or packing church buildings. We're talking about souls. When we see our family, friends and co-workers, we need to see that car wreck. What are we doing to help prepare them for that car wreck? What are we doing to make a difference in their lives?

We have two very special opportunities coming up to help with saving souls. Buddy Payne will be with us on July 31-August 1 to teach us about evidences in the natural world for God's creation. On August 29, we are taking advantage of having a new preacher to invite folks to come check out this congregation, but most of all to meet our Savior. No doubt there are numerous things we can do to make a difference, but I want to talk about 4 simple things every one of us can do no matter our age, no matter our background, no matter our Bible knowledge, no matter what.

Discussion:

I. Pray

- A. According to **Acts 11:21**, many people in Antioch turned to the Lord because the Lord's hand was with the church. If folks are to turn to the Lord in Brownsburg, we need to ask the Lord to have His hand with us. Also **Ephesians 3:20** says God can do far more abundantly beyond all we ask or think by His power working in us. We need to pray big prayers.
- B. Right now the elders have asked us to pray very specially for our upcoming opportunities. Especially in regard to our special opportunity on August 29. They have asked us to spend this past week and this coming week praying

that God would give us wisdom to pick out the one person we are going to invite and bring to that assembly. Then starting next Sunday, they have asked us to take two weeks to pray for God to give us wisdom, courage, and insight regarding how to invite the person we pick and to pray that the person will have a soft and receptive heart. I especially encourage the men who are leading us in our public prayers to start praying for these things as well.

II. Let Your Light Shine

- A. According to **Matthew 5:14-16**, we are to be the light of the world, to let our light shine so others may see our good works and glorify God. **I Peter 2:12** demonstrates we need to shine our lights even when non-Christians are mistreating us. Instead of getting vengeance, we need to shine our lights. In that way, they may repent and glorify God in the day of visitation.
- B. Shining our light simply means living our faith purposefully and obviously. As others see our lives, they will be intrigued and know they can turn to us for spiritual help when they are interested. They will be much more likely to listen when we pass on spiritual wisdom. As we shine our lights, let **Galatians 5:16, 22-23** be your guide. When those in the world see us face enemies, struggles, trials and troubles with the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control that has grown in us they will want what we have in Christ.
- C. I'd like to make three caveats about this point.
 1. First, I once heard someone say, "You need to let your light shine, not shine your own light." That was the Pharisees' problem. They were shining their own light. Remember a major part of our light is personal humility. If you go around looking down your nose at everyone, talking about how stupid everyone else is, or acting like everyone else is beneath you because of how righteous you are, you won't turn anyone to God.
 2. Second, when talking about letting your light shine, that doesn't mean being perfect. There is only one Jesus. Shining our light means letting people see us change and grow as we draw closer to Christ. It means making amends when we do something wrong. Sometimes it means messing up badly, but letting people see we can turn to Christ for strength. If you get the humility down that I just spoke about, others won't see hypocrisy when you mess up. They'll see Jesus' forgiveness.
 3. Third, if you're saying, "I just can't do this because I don't feel joy and peace." Please don't walk away feeling guilty. Let's get together some time to talk about how you personally can gain the joy, love and peace that come from being in Christ.

III. Invite to our assemblies and classes

- A. **Revelation 22:17** is not directly about inviting our friends and co-workers to the assemblies or classes of a local church. Rather, it is an invitation to come to Jesus and drink the living water from Him. At the same time, I think we recognize that the folks we will often have the most opportunity to make that invitation to are the ones who have first checked us out in our assemblies and classes. So, let's invite them to come.
- B. Increase the prospect's curiosity by asking them to come and check things out for themselves. Increase the invitation to a value statement by pointing out the spiritual value of what we're doing. We can talk about the peace that comes from a relationship with Christ. We can talk about the knowledge we gain from the preaching and teaching. We can talk about the family relationship.
- C. The number one religious change group in our nation is young families with small children. Learn the benefits of our children's classes so you can tell your friends about them. Find things about our classes you can recommend and pass along. Additionally, people are more likely to accept an invitation if you make it special. This is not just, "Hey, would you like to visit my church." But, "We've got something great going on. You ought to check it out." Make the invitation special.
- D. Again, we have two special opportunities coming up. Many folks are very interested in evidence for God's existence and creation. Let them know about that opportunity. Regarding our special opportunity on August 29, we are taking the following approach: "We have a new preacher and an old Savior, on August 29 we'd like to introduce you to both of them." What a special opportunity for folks. When you offer the invitation, make it special.

IV. Welcome our guests

- A. It's always tough to bring up this point in an assembly, because we have guests present. I hope you have already been sufficiently made to feel at home before I started preaching this lesson so that you don't just think the attention you are shown when I'm done is because people feel guilty after this lesson. At this point, I really only want to say keep up the good work to the brethren here. With few exceptions, you help our guests feel welcome. To our guests, if you feel like you are an exception to that, please let us know.
- B. How would you feel if I invited you over to my home for dinner one night but hardly said anything to you while you were there? You knocked on the door but I never answered it, instead one of my kids happened to open the door on their way out and let you in. I didn't greet you as you walked in; instead, I just kept reading my book or

working on my computer. You found your way to the living room and sat there until Marita said, "Dinner's ready." At the table, my family and I just talked among ourselves. Then when dinner was over, we went our separate ways and left you sitting there. As you made your way to the door to go home, you saw two of my kids playing a game in the yard having fun, the other two were on the Wii bowling, Marita and I were having a great conversation in the kitchen as we cleaned up the dishes. You weren't part of any of that, your kids were just standing beside you not invited to join in with mine, and so you just left. How would you feel about that? The next time I invited you, would you come back? Do you think it is any different in a church's assembly?

- C. **James 2:1-4** talks about receiving guests into our assemblies. We need to show impartiality. We need to show honor. We need to show respect. We need to welcome them in and lift them up. Any church worth its salt will have some kind of program in which folks are assigned certain aspects of working with our guests. However, the congregation that grows is the one in which everyone is giving their first attention to guests whether they have an assignment or not. When this assembly is over, speak with a guest before you speak with a friend.
- D. Let's face it. Folks can see us as moral people and decide to check out what's going on in our congregation, but if they get here and are given a cold shoulder they won't come back or listen to what we have to teach them. You can help our guests prepare for their "car wreck" by helping them feel at home when they come in.

Conclusion:

I realize these aren't the only things necessary in saving souls. However, these are 4 things that each and every one of us can do. They are things each and every one of us can do this week. As you do these things you are preparing your friends, family, neighbors, co-workers for their car wreck. You are also paving the way for your serenity as these folks face their car wreck. You will be able to take comfort knowing you did your part in helping prepare them. Let's all commit to these 4 things this week.