



TRANSFORM  
OUR WORLD

## THE SCHOOL OF TRANSFORMATION



# FAMILY TRANSFORMATION

*Week 5* **PRAYER EVANGELISM AS A FAMILY LIFESTYLE**



# SUMMARY

## WEEK 5

### IN THIS SESSION YOU WILL:

1. Learn about four levels at which Christians operate in the marketplace and how to operate at the highest level, transforming the marketplace.
2. Learn the four steps of prayer evangelism according to Luke 10 and how to develop ministry as a family lifestyle.
3. Learn how prayer evangelism enables you and your family to go to a hurting world with solutions.
4. Receive an impartation to minister with your family.

Prayer Evangelism is not a program but a lifestyle with our family where we change the spiritual climate in our family and beyond. When we *bless* those who are antagonistic to us, *fellowship* rather than avoid them, *minister* to them rather than judge them and then *proclaim* to them the Kingdom of God has come, we change the spiritual climate and bring people into God's kingdom wherever we live, work, and play as a family.





# PREPARATION

## PRAYER EVANGELISM ACCORDING TO JESUS

Before we can change the spiritual climate over our cities, we must have a working knowledge of one of our primary tools: prayer evangelism. I introduced the essence of the concept of prayer evangelism in *That None Should Perish* in 1994, but since then much has been learned from using this potent weapon on the front lines. Several years of working side by side with pastors and leaders in cities all over the world have enriched tremendously our initial understanding of this concept.

Simply put, prayer evangelism is talking to God about our neighbors before we talk to our neighbors about God. This definition, coined by Beverly Jaime,<sup>1</sup> has helped us to put at ease thousands of Christians who have a genuine desire to witness to the lost but who feel inadequate or scared to share the gospel with them.

Continue reading...go to the Appendix and read the complete article from *Prayer Evangelism*, ch. 2.



# GOING DEEPER

## IN THIS SESSION YOU WILL:

Watch Mentoring Session 6: “Personal Prayer Evangelism”

<http://www.transformourworld.org/en/mentoring/personal-prayer-evangelism>

## Welcome to Mentoring



Welcome to Mentoring  
by Ed Silvano

# WEBCAST

## TEACHING



In the book Prayer Evangelism chapter 1 the title is “What the Devil Doesn’t Want You To Know”. Do you know what the devil doesn’t want you to know? That he’s a loser. And there I tell the story when I felt overwhelmed maybe like you do today, tempted to quit. And then the Lord brought to my mind that scene from the movie Rocky, when Rocky and Apollos were both down and the referee begins the count with two boxers down. But Rocky’s feisty manager, Mickey, begins to shout, “Get up, Get up, Get up you bum!” And Rocky begins to register little by little and begins to get up. And eventually he makes it barely as the referee counts 10 – and he wins! Because he got up! I’ll tell you as we begin and before we turn it over to Chuck, the Lord is telling you if you are down: “Get up, get up...you blessed one! Get up because this is week 5 of the School of Tyrannus.”

And everything has to do with the Ekklesia. Remember we used the word Ekklesia to described the church. The church as it’s seen in the book of Acts.

## NOTES:

There are four levels where Christians can find themselves in the marketplace as part of the Ekklesia.

Number 1 bottom level – you don't want to go there.

1. Christians barely surviving in the marketplace



Level 1 is not where you want to be. So “get up you blessed one.”

## THE SECOND LEVEL IS

2. Christians who apply biblical principles in the marketplace



## NOTES:

The problem is that Christians at this level are applying biblical principles for the marketplace not to change them, rather than applying principles to change the marketplace.

Rather, the Ekklesia is to be like yeast, light, heat, a river – everything that has to do with the kingdom of God transforms the environment. So if you play for a draw in every game you never win the championship. So that's a good beginning. But during this session and the next one we are talking about higher levels.

### LEVEL 3 IS...

3. Christians who do business in the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit



Where? In the Marketplace.

And in my book Transformation I tell the story of a lady who all of a sudden realized "I am a marketplace minister. When I go to work I'm taking the power and the presence of God."

Basically she was saying I am the Ekklesia. She heard from God about a very shady deal that was made, and God through the Holy Spirit indwelling this lady revealed to her how somebody was cheating her and her company. And because she was doing business in the fullness and the power of the Holy Spirit, the scheme was exposed, the company made incredible progress, and she got a promotion. Can it get any better than that?

### NOTES:



## YES! LEVEL 4.

4. Christians who bring transformation to the marketplace.

## NOTES:

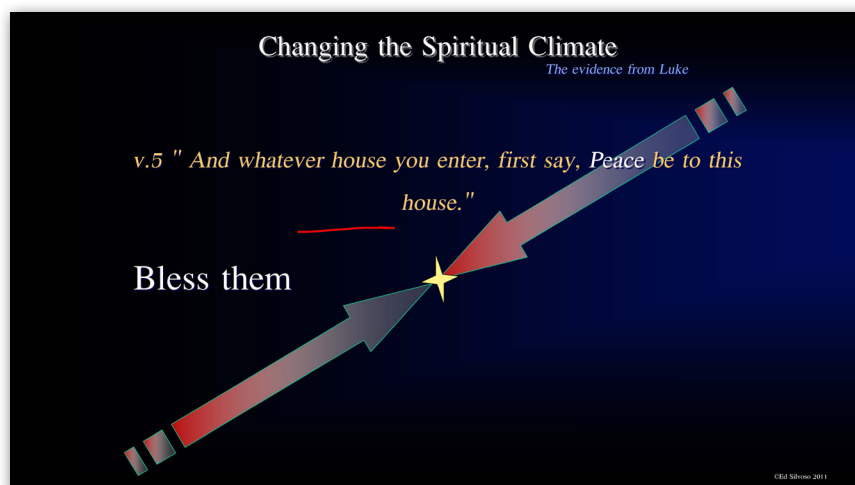


Now we move to the penthouse of transformation – Christians who bring transformation to the marketplace. They go there believing that we are going to see the world transformed.

That's why in that context it is so important to realize that prayer evangelism is the key. What is prayer evangelism?

To put it in context because next week we are going to talk in greater detail, there are four steps to prayer evangelism as explained in the book Prayer Evangelism and taken from Luke 10.

1. Bless them.



And remember Jesus said you are lambs they are wolves. You don't like them but you bless them. You say peace to them.

2. Fellowship with them.



That means you eat with them and let them pay for it. What do I mean by that? I mean that you have to play visitor. The world will not come into the Ekklesia - the Ekklesia must go into the world!

You see when you begin to bless them, the first person who is transformed is you. Now that you have been transformed you have Christ's attitude. Then you can fellowship with them.

When you fellowship with them Jesus said to then minister to them.

3. Minister to felt needs.



NOTES:

What that means is that any problem they have, you be part of the solution. Minister to them.

Bless – fellowship – and minister.

And once you have done 1 2 & 3 you don't have to sweat it out. The kingdom of God has come to that house.

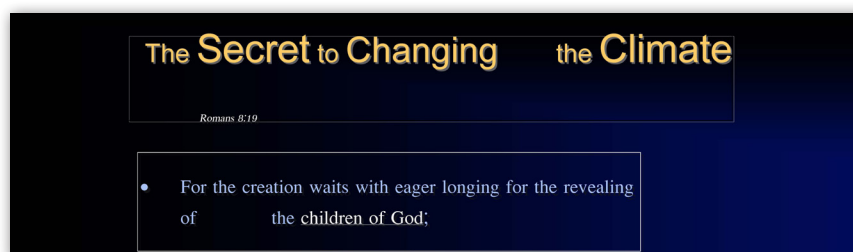
## NOTES:



4. Proclaim the kingdom of God has come.

Which means that the kingdom of darkness is gone. Which means my friend, get up, get up you blessed one. Because, if you get up, you win.

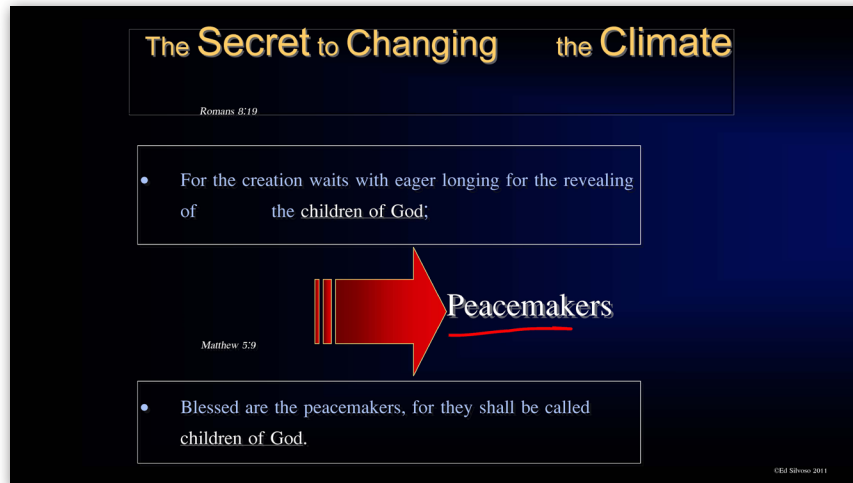
And you know Romans 8:19 says



The whole world is waiting for the Ekklesia to check in.

Now why is it that they don't recognize us as the children of God. One of the clues is in Matthew 5:9. It says...

## NOTES:



So we need to go to a hurting world with solutions. We need to go those who are ostracized and tell them, "You are welcome."

That is the essence of prayer evangelism.

In *Prayer Evangelism* ch. 4, I explain the truth about binary truths. These are truths that are presented in tandem in the Bible.

It says in John 1:25 describing the Lord Jesus that we beheld his glory, glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and full of truth.

That means that when sinners look at Jesus they saw grace. And grace to a sinner is a huge "welcome sign". And once we run to him the truth that he will impart to us will set us free.

This is the key to transformation in the family which is our subject today. And prayer evangelism as a lifestyle.

We need to understand that we must lead with grace. If we lead with truth, with judgment we're going to get in trouble.

You see the order of the factors in an equation is as important as the factors themselves.



If you want to have a very satisfying horse riding experience you need three things: You need a horse. You need a rider. And most important you need to know which one goes on top.

Because you may have all the components and be totally frustrated carrying a horse on your back.

And this is the power behind the Ekklesia. We lead with grace and truth follows and the power of God is released.



CHUCK: I want to share with you an example of what Ed was talking about. (testimony of prayer evangelism with Nazi supremacist gang).



JILL: Well this is also playing out in Uganda where intercessors gathered together to pray for and to bless and to speak peace over the nation. The president himself dedicated himself and his entire family to the Lord. And not only that he ended up encouraging men and families from all over the nation to do the same thing.

## NOTES:



BENJY: Transformation is something that we should practice as a family and it is a process.

1. Story of dad whose son was attacked by a pit bull. An antagonistic situation was overturned by this dad being proactive speaking peace with a bag of cookies.
2. Story of Adam and Leigh-Ann Hamman. Leigh-Ann moved from prayer walking and asking the Lord to “use me” to saying “Lord use us as a family” when she began to see her children as “arrows in my quiver”!



ED: Well we are going to roll a tape now about the family track at our conference in Hawaii, which by the way in 2014 happens on Oct 27-31.

Now I want you to watch these children, mighty children, whose parents, like Benjy shared, are walking together, practicing prayer evangelism. Get ready to be blessed and to be inspired and every time the kids say something to the audience, that goes for you.

ISABELLA: (story of young boy named Samuel – as an intro to young people who will tell how they have learned to hear God's voice)

SERENA: (about a time I heard God's voice in my life. Felt the Holy Spirit leading me to ask girl if she needed prayer. Led her to renew her relationship with the Lord)

So what I encourage you all to do is, when God speaks to you, even when it seems unusual or out of your comfort zone, if it really is God then he has it aligned in his perfect will. And he knows exactly what he wants you to do. He just needs you to do it. Thank you.

MIA: (tells about what she's learned about hearing God's voice). God told me (and this is for all of us) to be bold x 10 which means more than ever. So God wants us to be bold when we share our faith with people.

EMMA: (about listening to God's voice. Tells about buying dress and praying for lady who sold it to her)

BENJI: (trying to understand everything about God)

Out in the ocean God told me He's not a God to try and understand but a God to trust.

EMILY: (tells about how God spoke to her to read a Psalm and how he spoke saying that If we trust God, He will do good things through us and in us)

SOPHIA: (earlier this summer didn't feel as close to God. Tells of how she felt this needs to change. Wrote down prayer asking God to help her feel close as before. Next evening doing dishes, began worshipping, the singing a prayer. Felt the HS rush over me. Started singing in tongues and the entire room was filled with then presence of God so that I had to get down on my knees for an hour alone with God. Thought it would be gradual but it happened one hour the next day.

MELANIE: (about a time I felt the Lord speak to me and I obeyed)

## NOTES:

## NOTES:

The Lord prompted me to send a verse to my grandpa, Ed Silvos. It didn't make sense but within minutes I received a text where he said he was about to preach and he was praying about what passage to preach from and the text I sent him had one of the passages he had considered sharing from. He said that that God used my obedience to send that text to guide him as to what he was to preach on. Praise the Lord.

I want to encourage us all to promptly obey when we hear the Holy Spirit speak to us even when it doesn't make total sense.

His desire is to use us as his hands and feet even if it's just a simple text message.

BENJY: (transitions to "two guest speakers") They are going to be speaking on how they overcame some difficulties and challenges.

EDAN: (tells of overcoming fear. The Holy Spirit showed him it was time to get baptized. Old Edan crucified, came out of the water as the new Edan. When he was baptized something broke. He told his parents he needed a new haircut. Got new a new hair cut as a prophetic act that it's a new day and "I am a new creation.")

NATHAN: I'm here to tell you that if God can help transform my mind he can definitely transform yours.

ED: This is the Lord speaking to you...(prayer and impartation)



BENJY: Wow! What an impartation. I hope you have received everything that the Lord has for you today.

What a great illustration of what we always say, that there is no Jr. Holy Spirit. Amen.





# DISCUSSION

## QUESTIONS FOR YOUR GROUP

1. Of the four levels where Christians find themselves in the marketplace as part of the Ekklesia, at what level do you see most Christians you know? At what level are you?

- Christians who bring transformation to the marketplace
- Christians who do business in the and fullness of the Holy Spirit
- Christians who apply biblical principles in the marketplace
- Christians who are barely surviving in the marketplace

2. What are the four steps of prayer evangelism based on Luke 10 and how does one lead to the other? How does this method take the pressure off and empower you to do ministry as a lifestyle with your family?

3. How does prayer evangelism enable you to go to a hurting world with solutions? How can you do this as a family? What will be the result?

4. What hope and impartations did you receive from the testimonies and ministry by the children in this session?

A horizontal banner featuring a green top bar. Below it, a background image shows the silhouettes of two people standing against a bright, hazy sky. Overlaid on this image is the word "APPLICATION" in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

# APPLICATION

## REFLECTION AND ACTION

1. What do I need to do to move to the highest level in the marketplace (as one who brings transformation to the marketplace rather than just surviving, applying biblical principles or doing business in the fullness of the Holy Spirit? How can prayer evangelism help me get there?
2. Begin practicing prayer evangelism in order to develop it as a lifestyle. Begin by blessing every person, place or system you encounter.
3. Seek to involve your family by leading them to bless others. Think of creative ways of working together to meet felt needs of neighbors or fellow students that you and your family are connected with.
4. Continue to pull down any strongholds that are keeping you from the hope of ministry with your family.
5. Write a report of your progress for the forum.

# APPENDIX

## PRAYER EVANGELISM ACCORDING TO JESUS

Before we can change the spiritual climate over our cities, we must have a working knowledge of one of our primary tools: prayer evangelism. I introduced the essence of the concept of prayer evangelism in *That None Should Perish* in 1994, but since then much has been learned from using this potent weapon on the front lines. Several years of working side by side with pastors and leaders in cities all over the world have enriched tremendously our initial understanding of this concept.

Simply put, prayer evangelism is talking to God about our neighbors before we talk to our neighbors about God. This definition, coined by Beverly Jaime,<sup>1</sup> has helped us to put at ease thousands of Christians who have a genuine desire to witness to the lost but who feel inadequate or scared to share the gospel with them.



I know those feelings of inadequacy very well; they used to torment me as a brand-

new Christian. Shortly after my conversion, a visiting evangelist pounded on the pulpit at my church and declared, “No one should hear the gospel twice until everybody has heard it once! Therefore, since all of you have heard it more than once, I will not preach to you. Instead, I will organize you into pairs to witness door-to-door to those who have not heard it yet.” At that moment panic struck, and I found myself foolishly wishing that an earthquake, a tornado, a flood, *anything* catastrophic, would hit our town so I would not have to go out to witness to strangers.

Why such a negative reaction? I wasn’t opposed to witnessing; I was just scared of talking to strangers. Being the shy person that I was, even if I had mustered enough courage to *try*, fear of rejection would probably have immobilized me anyway.

As it turned out, neither flood nor earthquake hit town to alleviate my anxiety. So I began to fervently hope I would be paired with a vivacious, engaging, talkative individual—someone to whom I could say, “Obviously, you have the gift and the anointing for door-to-door evangelism. You take the point and talk to people, while I step into the background and silently pray for you.” But it was not to happen that way.

Although I was painfully shy, I had always been perceived by my peers to be a leader—a shy leader but a leader nonetheless. As far back as I can remember, I was expected to lead. So, under the watchful gaze of the fiery evangelist, my pastor told me, “Ed, we

are going to team you up with a younger Christian so you can show him how to do it.” Me? Show someone else how to do it? I did not know how to witness myself! But soon I found myself and my young charge walking up to a door that, to me, resembled the entrance to a lion’s den.

Under the admiring gaze of my pupil, I knocked on the door as softly as I could, fervently hoping that no one would be home. I heard steps approaching, and I dearly wished it would be a child, no more than 3 or 4 years old, so I could sit down with him and just talk for the next hour while others from my church visited the rest of the block.

I was so ashamed of my cowardliness! Fear and shame are a lethal combination for an aspiring evangelist. Even though I wanted to do great things for God, I was threatened by the prospect of having to share the gospel with total strangers.

However, all that changed the day I discovered the dynamic, biblical principle of prayer evangelism.

## **PRAYER EVANGELISM IN FOUR EASY STEPS**

Whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace be to this house.” And whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you” (Luke 10:5,8,9).

The principles of prayer evangelism are taught in several places in the Bible, but the most complete model is found in this passage. This is the only occasion in the Gospels where Jesus spells out an evangelistic meth-

od. Here He calls for us to do four things for the lost:

1. Speak peace to them.
2. Fellowship with them.
3. Take care of their needs.
4. Proclaim the good news.

The first of these four steps will open the door to the second step and so forth. It is very important for us to understand that the steps are interconnected and, to be effective, must be implemented in the order given. We will soon see why this is so.

This four-step method proved so successful that soon after Jesus taught it to His disciples, multitudes came to believe in Jesus and demons surrendered en masse to a bunch of rookie evangelists. Unfortunately, these are not the results we see today when we evangelize. What is the problem? Rather than following Jesus’ four-step approach, we reverse the order and begin with the last step, witnessing, and skip the blessing, the fellowship and the caring that are to precede the good news. In most cases, this approach to witnessing does not work.

We knock on a door—many times out of guilt or, as in my case, pressure—and if that door opens a crack, we get three minutes of reluctant attention. And two and a half of those minutes are wasted explaining the difference between us and the Jehovah’s Witnesses!

Why should the people in that house believe that we—complete strangers—are going to heaven and that they are going to hell? Why should they believe that the Bible is the Word of God? To them, the Bible is no different than the book of Mormon or the sayings of Buddha or Mao. What credibility do we have to cause them to believe anything



we say? For credibility to develop, a process is necessary. This is where prayer evangelism comes in.

The beginning of Jesus' prescribed process calls for us to become shepherds to the people in our circle of influence. They may not yet know that we are their pastors; but we should know they are our sheep. We must begin by caring for them. This attitude is at the heart of Jesus' strategy.

## WE MUST MAKE PEACE WITH THE LOST

Jesus' method of evangelism calls for us to first speak peace over the lost. This is important for at least three reasons.

*Reason #1: We need to declare peace because we, as Christians, have been at war with the lost.* Too often, "Repent or burn" is the banner under which we approach the unsaved of this world. Unfortunately, we have a tendency to strongly dislike sinners, and this soon becomes obvious to them. Our belligerent attitudes do tremendous disservice to Jesus, who in His earthly days was glad to be known as a friend of sinners. If Jesus is their friend, we cannot be their enemies.

I became aware of my own belligerence toward the lost the first time I tried to implement the Luke 10 strategy in our neighborhood. Instead of claiming the promises of God to deal with the problems I saw in my neighbors' lives, I told God about everything that was wrong with these people. I talked to Him in disgust about the unwed mother and how she *had* to change because she was such a bad example to my daughters. I demanded that He do something about the

couple who kept us awake at night with their arguing and fighting. I complained about the depressive neighbor whose front yard was a disgrace and a bane to real estate values on our block. And of course I did not forget about the teenager on drugs. I made it perfectly clear to the Lord what a detriment this young man was to our neighborhood.

All of a sudden, I sensed God saying, "Ed, I am so glad you have not witnessed to any of these yet."

Surprised, I asked, "Lord, why is that?"

His reply was very sobering: "Because I don't want your neighbors to know that you and I are related. I hurt when they hurt. I reach out to them. I constantly extend grace to them. I am the God who causes the sun to rise over the righteous and unrighteous alike. I love them. But you don't. You resent them. Rather than being an advocate for them, a lawyer for the defense, you are instead a witness for the prosecution . . . if not the prosecutor himself." Then He rebuked me, saying, "Ed, unless you love them, I cannot trust you with their lives."

Right there, on a sidewalk in my own neighborhood, under tremendous conviction of the Holy Spirit, I cried out to Him to make my heart more like His.



Preaching the truth without love is like giving someone a good kiss when you have bad breath. No matter how good your kiss is, all the recipient will remember is your bad breath! This is what happens when, in anger or disgust, we tell the lost how terrible and depraved their lives are and how they are surely going to hell. Even though this may be true, our negative approach blocks and distorts the central message of the Bible: that God sent His Son, not to condemn the world, but to save it (see John 3:17).

*Reason #2: If we bless the lost, we will stop cursing them.* We do not realize how often we curse others, or else we would not do it. When we say, “The lady across the street is a drunkard; she is going to die of cirrhosis of the liver,” we are cursing her. When we point to rowdy teenagers and complain, “They are nuisances and morons who drink and drive and experiment with drugs, and soon they are going to kill themselves,” we are cursing them. When we pronounce blessings on our neighbors, our city is edified (see Prov. 11:11). But when we curse our neighbors, we tear down the city, beginning with the block we live on.

*Reason #3: We speak peace in order to neutralize the demons that have been assigned to blind our neighbors to the light of the gospel.* The Bible explains clearly why all the people in our circle of influence have not yet come to the Lord: “The god of this world [the devil] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel” (2 Cor. 4:4). This means that the devil is *actively* blinding them, because light cannot be blocked passively. Given the fact that Satan is not omnipresent—he cannot be in more than one place at a time—how then can he blind the minds of billions of people simul-

taneously? He uses demons as implied in the parable of the sower, where we are told that after the seed is planted, the birds of the sky (representing the devil and his forces) come and steal it (see Luke 8:5,12).

The apostle Paul places the task of opening the eyes of the lost squarely on our shoulders and within a context of evangelism and spiritual warfare:

I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:17,18, NIV).



Paul leaves no doubt as to the active role Satan and his demons play in blinding the lost to the gospel. Hence, we need to factor in how to disable the demonic grip on those we are trying to reach.

To deal effectively with our spiritual foes, we cannot empower them by approaching the lost in anger. The Bible clearly teaches that our unresolved anger gives room to the devil inside our circle of influence (see Eph. 4:26,27). Our curses will only strengthen the demonic grip on the ones we are trying to save. To reverse this situation, we must renounce our anger and begin to speak peace to the lost.

Blessings are more powerful than curses because curses can be broken. In the celestial poker game, a hand of blessings always beats a hand of curses. An atmosphere of blessings weakens the grip of demons, and they soon fold and leave the table.

## A TANGIBLE PEACE

When we speak blessings over those in our circle of influence, sooner or later people who used to avoid us will begin to seek us out, opening the door to fellowship (step 2 in the process). This is because they can actually feel the blessings we have spoken over them. Jesus described this kind of peace as something almost tangible:

First say, “Peace be to this house.” And if a man of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him; but if not, it will return to you (Luke 10:5,6).

Your neighbors may come to you and say something like, “When I see you walking by, I get a positive vibration.” That’s New Age lingo for peace. What they mean is that in your presence they feel something tangible—and they like it!

A Christian lady in England had not been able to meet her neighbor, who was bedridden due to a serious condition. Nevertheless, every Thursday she and other believing women spoke peace to her from across the street. This went on for several months until one day, the unbelieving neighbor and her children showed up at the Christian woman’s door unexpectedly. The neighbor said, “I came to thank you for the blessings you sent my way, because thanks to those blessings, I am healed.” The surprised Christian asked how she knew about the blessings. “Oh, I

felt them coming every week. Please, tell me more about it.” It took no effort at all to lead that lady and her children to Christ.

If I accidentally cut somebody off on the freeway, I can often feel the other driver’s silent curses, even if he or she does not make any obscene gestures or give me an angry blast from the car horn. I feel it first on the back of my neck and then inside as my “soul climate” takes a turn for the worse. If a child of God can feel a curse that is energized by the powers of darkness, how much more will the lost feel a blessing that is empowered by the blood that Jesus shed at Calvary? This is why when we bless our neighbors, they will begin to come around—because they *feel* blessed. Sinners loved to hang around Jesus, because there was just something about Him that drew others to Him. Our neighbors should feel the same way about us, as we are His representatives on earth (see Luke 10:16).

## TWO-WAY FELLOWSHIP

Once you have broken the ice with your neighbors, do not rush to share the gospel with them. Fellowship is the next step, not proclamation. Proclamation is the last step. If you’ve invited these formerly neglected sinners over for dinner, do not ambush them with the Four Spiritual Laws between the hamburgers and the apple pie. Be patient. You may wonder, *What value is there in fellowship with the lost unless I share the gospel with them?* Fellowship provides an opportunity to show unconditional acceptance by welcoming our neighbors just the way they are instead of the way we want them to be.

So often, we come off decidedly un-Christ-like in our interaction with the lost, especially

with those who are certified, industrial-strength sinners. We barely put up with them, and we make it painfully clear that we can't wait for them to change and become more like us. This is a destructive attitude unworthy of Christ and His kingdom. To change this, we must spend time with our neighbors, not to patronize or proselytize them but to *receive* from them: "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you" (Luke 10:7). Jesus instructs us to eat and drink everything our neighbors set before us. His evangelism model calls for two-way fellowship, with an emphasis on receiving rather than unilaterally giving.

One of the worst mistakes we make when evangelizing is to treat the unsaved like dirt, as if they have no value whatsoever unless they become Christians. Besides being wrong, this attitude is also very demeaning and only widens the gap between them and us. Worse yet, it widens the chasm between them and Jesus, whom we represent.

Jesus always treated sinners with respect. The worse the sinners—e.g., Zaccheus or the adulterous woman—often the greater the respect with which He treated them. Therefore, we should never treat the lost as people without value. Regardless of how they rate as sinners, the lost always have value as human beings because *they too were made in the image of God*.

Two-way fellowship points us in the right direction. When we allow unbelievers to do something for us, we affirm their value and dignity as God's design and creation. In Jesus' day, the custom was to offer food and lodging to visitors, even to strangers. Today playing football, sharing a meal, working in the yard together or organizing

a multifamily garage sale together allows us to speak blessings upon our neighbors at close range.



## FISHING REQUIRES PATIENCE

Blessing sinners opens the door to fellowship, and fellowship eventually leads to the third step: an opportunity to meet their felt needs. This will only happen after they trust us enough to disclose those needs. Once such trust exists, they may share that their marriage looks good on the surface but is rotting inside. They may tell us about their fear of losing their job, or they may seek our help with an addiction they cannot overcome. The once-distant neighbors will begin to share heart-to-heart with us because they sense that we have an answer. And they will ask for our help because they now have tangible proof that we truly care for them.

It is at that precise moment when we can say to them, "I have been praying for you, and I would be delighted to pray about this, too." Now you may be thinking, *Shouldn't we lead them to the Lord first?* Understand, what our



neighbors are sharing at this point in time is the need they feel is most important—in other words, their felt needs. Obviously, the most important need they have is salvation, but they don't know that yet. Nevertheless, through their felt needs, God creates an avenue to show them that Jesus is indeed a friend of sinners and He came to save them and not to condemn them.

*What if I pray and nothing happens?* you may wonder. *I don't want God's reputation to be damaged.* If you insist on knowing for sure that God will answer before you decide to pray, you are missing the point. You are only promising prayer, not an answer to prayer. Prayer is the most tangible trace of eternity in the human heart. When you pray for their felt needs, you touch your neighbors at the deepest level, the heart level. This is the closest you can get to them. Sooner or later that touch will register with them. Be patient. Even a master fisherman cannot force the fish to bite. Fishing requires patience.

Our fear that God will get a bad name because of unanswered prayers is unwarranted since unbelievers, at the most rudimentary level, understand prayer better than we do! They know they have a problem for which they have no solution. They suspect that someone greater and more powerful has the answer, but they do not know how to reach such a person. That is why an offer of prayer in a moment of crisis is *always* welcome, because it makes the connection between those two points in their thinking.

Suppose you have a problem that only the president of the United States can fix. He is the person with the power and the resources to solve your dilemma, but you do not know

the man, and he does not know you. You can think of no way to make your need known to him. Then, in your most desperate hour, I tell you I have a very good friend who happens to be the head janitor at the White House and he cleans the Oval Office every day. I then propose that if you write a letter to the president about your need, I will give it to my friend to put on the president's desk. If I were to do that, would you say, "Well, Ed, before I sit down to write that letter, you must assure me that the president will read the letter and grant my request. Unless you promise me that he will, I will not write it"? You would never respond this way simply because you would be appreciative that I had reached out to you with a potential solution when you had none.

Unbelievers have the same attitude about prayer. They know that God has a solution, but they do not have His phone number. If you are willing to make the phone call on their behalf, they will be most grateful for it, regardless of the outcome—especially if it is on your dime.

## GOD'S PRIORITIES

Furthermore, God seems to be partial to the needs of unbelievers. As I shared in my previous book, our greatest surprise in Resistencia, Argentina, was how quickly and often unexpectedly God answered prayers on behalf of the lost. Sometimes His responses baffled us. A local congregation was praying for one of its members who had terminal cancer. At the same time, the church was praying for an unbeliever who was also dying of cancer. The Christian died and the unbeliever was healed. Someone in the congregation became very upset, claiming it was not fair and asking God for an explanation. The Lord responded, "Let me explain it to

you. The believer who died is here with Me in heaven; but if the unbeliever had died, he would be in hell now.” Obviously, God has his priorities straight. Let us emulate Him!

## SAFE TO APPROACH

Once we have completed the first three steps—blessing, fellowship and taking care of their needs—leading our neighbors to the Lord becomes as easy as angling a whale in a swimming pool. You cannot miss because you have given them peace, which is what unbelievers lack the most; you have provided them with the most protective, healing fellowship they have ever enjoyed; and you have offered prayers for needs they feel very deeply and have not been able to meet on their own. Now it is very natural for them to ask, “Tell me, who is this God who loves me?” They feel safe in approaching you because there has been a gradual improvement in the spiritual climate of your relationship as it moved from step one to step four.

We will learn more about changing a spiritual climate in the next chapter. In the meantime, let us review the four steps Jesus laid out for us in Luke 10 and how these steps lead from one to the next:

1. *Blessing* opens the door to unbiased fellowship.
2. *Fellowship* establishes a level of trust, allowing our neighbors to share with us their felt needs.
3. *Prayer* addresses their felt needs.
4. When we intercede for our neighbors, *the kingdom of God comes near them* in a tangible way: “Say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Luke 10:9).

Please notice that we are not to bring them into the Kingdom; we are to take the Kingdom to them.

Taking the Kingdom to the lost is like driving through the desert in an air-conditioned truck stocked with cold drinks. When you spot a weary pedestrian lost on a lonely road on a hot summer day, if you pull up next to him, you don’t need to beg him to come on board. All you need to do is pull over near to him and open the door!

## WHY ARE WE DOING SUCH A POOR JOB OF REACHING THE LOST?

In John 14:12, Jesus tells us that if we believe in Him, we will do greater works than He did while on the earth. This is a key passage, since it provides the answer to a most difficult question: Why is the Church today doing such a poor job of fulfilling the Great Commission compared to the Early Church?

The Early Church was able to fill the entire city of Jerusalem with the teachings of Jesus in just a few weeks (see Acts 5:28). This could not have been an easy task in the city where Jesus was publicly hung as a criminal and His resurrection discredited by rumors cleverly orchestrated and sustained by the religious power brokers. Nevertheless, Jerusalem was reached, and soon the gospel spread to all Judea and Samaria and beyond until “all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10).

Furthermore, Paul saturated with the gospel an even greater area—from Jerusalem to Illyricum, across the Adriatic Sea from modern-day Italy—so much so that he had to move on to newer and distant regions, such as Spain, because he was determined not to evangelize where Christ had already been

proclaimed (see Rom. 15:19-23). Just consider for a moment the implication of this statement. This means that from Jerusalem in the Middle East all the way to Southern Europe, *there was not a single place where Christ had not been proclaimed*.

Moreover, this extraordinary expansion of the faith happened in a relatively short time in the face of fierce and brutal persecution and without the abundance of resources available to us today. What's more, history tells us that by the beginning of the fourth century, Christians had "conquered" the mighty empire that had taken pleasure in persecuting them. How did this come about? The Early Church knew something that we have not yet learned: *They could do greater works than Jesus did*.

## THE COMMAND TO DO GREATER THINGS

How can we possibly do something greater than the Son of God has done? Many Bible commentaries are silent or evasive on this topic. Others attempt to sidestep the issue by saying that although we can never surpass the *quality* of Jesus' works, we can certainly exceed them in *quantity*. After all, Jesus preached publicly for only three years, and He never preached to more than a few thousand people at a time. Billy Graham and others have led international ministries that spanned decades, sometimes preaching to hundreds of thousands in a single gathering. Jesus never traveled far from Galilee during His ministry, whereas many believers have since carried the gospel to the nations of the world, thus having done something greater than Jesus. These are nice suggestions, but

they represent awful hermeneutics because they have nothing to do with what the text actually says:

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. *If you love Me, you will keep My commandments* (John 14:12-15, emphasis added).

Jesus states that everyone who believes in Him should do the same works that He did. And now that He has been glorified, these works have been upgraded to *greater* works. This point cannot be argued at all. It is a promise dependent on one condition: belief in Jesus. If we believe in Jesus, we are not only entitled to do greater works than He did; we are *commanded* to do so.

What are the greater works Jesus commands us to do? His own words suggest that they have to do with prayer: "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (v. 13). He is not speaking about prayer in general, however, but rather about a specific kind of prayer: prayer that addresses the felt needs of the lost. How do I arrive at this conclusion? The key is the word "glorified." Jesus says that He will do anything we ask in His name, so that the Father will be glorified in the Son. That is, unbelievers will come to the Father through Jesus when they have been convinced of His divinity by a miracle.

## PHILIP: A PROTOTYPE OF MODERN MAN

To see this more clearly, we need to go back to a few moments earlier in this same conversation, when Jesus says to His disciples, “Believe in God, believe also in Me” (John 14:1). In other words, “Believe also that I am God.” The disciples are probably stunned at this point, but Jesus goes on, making yet another amazing, absolutely unprecedented statement: “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places. I am going ahead to prepare a place for you. When those dwellings are ready, I will come and take you there myself”(see vv. 2,3). This is an extraordinary promise because up to this moment (as recorded in the Bible), never have mortal, sinful men been so openly and clearly assured of going to heaven. When Thomas asks how to get to this wonderful place, Jesus declares, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (v. 6).

Jesus then comforts His disciples, assuring them that because they have known Him, they have known God and have seen Him. Philip now chimes in, saying, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us” (v. 8).

Philip was probably a shy person. I say this because shy people make good diplomats; they are able to say something negative in such a way that it sounds positive. Philip says something here that on the surface sounds polite and humble but in reality is rude and negative: “Lord, if you show me the Father, that is enough for me.” But Jesus is able to see through his veneer to the core of unbelief behind Philip’s comment. This is why He confronts Philip, demanding, “Why don’t you believe Me when I say that he who has seen Me

has seen the Father?” (see vv. 9,10). Knowing that Philip does not believe in His divinity, Jesus says, “Philip, if you do not believe in Me by My words, believe in Me by My works. Let My miracles prove to you that I am who I say” (see v. 11).

Philip believed in God, and he wanted to go to a better place—the Father’s house—when he died. Today, the vast majority of the population claims to believe in God, and they would love to go to a better place when they die; but like Philip, most of them do not believe that Jesus is the only way to the Father. That is why this passage merits attention and serious study. If we understand how Jesus dealt with this issue that affects so many people in this day and age, we will have the key to reaching our cities for Christ.

What Jesus is teaching Philip is that it is all right to see in order to believe. Jesus knows that Philip, once convinced, will do “the works that I do” and “greater works than these”—miracles worked through prayer—to convince others who likewise do not believe that Jesus is God or the way to God (v. 12).

This passage is extraordinary in that it presents prayer and evangelism as fully integrated components of the same equation. Traditionally, the Church has used prayer as a primer for evangelism. We have prayed for the lost so that, when evangelized, they will listen and hopefully receive Jesus. In this passage, however, Jesus presents prayer as evangelism. Prayer becomes evangelism when used to open the eyes of unbelievers to the divinity of Jesus. To that effect, He used someone like Philip, who did not believe that Jesus is God, to show us how to break through this widespread barrier of unbelief. The key is *prayer for*

*miracles that meet the felt needs of unbelieving people.*

## A PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Let's test this principle of prayer evangelism in a hypothetical setting.

Imagine yourself standing at the front door of your house. Now, count five neighboring houses to the right, five to the left and another five across from or behind your house. If you live in an apartment building, identify five families to your right and five to your left and another five on the floors above you or below you. Essentially, you have identified a cluster of families comprising roughly a hundred people. Now focus on the most needy of these households and identify its most vulnerable member. Most likely you are going to come up with somebody who is depressed, terminally ill, perennially bankrupt or controlled and being destroyed by vices. Now picture that person in the midst of a major crisis, when everything is caving in and causing him or her to become desperate.



Now imagine yourself going up to that person and saying, "Please, do not worry. I am praying for you in the name of Jesus for God to intervene on your behalf." Startled, that

person may say to you, "Oh, don't waste your time because I don't believe in prayer," to which you would reply, "Oh, don't worry. It doesn't make any difference whether you believe in prayer or not since you are not praying. I am the one praying, and I believe in prayer." This person may retort, "I do not believe in Jesus either." You then say, "Don't worry. Once I am done, you will."

At this point, it is fair to say that you are making that neighbor an offer that he or she cannot refuse—an offer very similar to the one Jesus made to Philip: "If you do not believe in Me by My words, believe in Me by My works." Now imagine that after you have prayed for a miracle, a miracle does happen! The house that was in foreclosure is miraculously saved through an extraordinary series of events, or a better job replaces the one that was lost, or a sick person is healed. Would that person suddenly be interested in knowing who Jesus is? Absolutely!

## STICK WITH A WINNING STRATEGY

Most of us, if not all of us, came to the Lord as a result of someone's prayers. Why then do we discard this winning strategy once we have become doctrinally and theologically educated? If we are going to fulfill the Great Commission in our generation, we need to find a better way to reach the lost. Prayer evangelism means doing greater works than Jesus did. It's exhilarating, edifying and exciting, and this method accomplishes much more than any other, as we will soon see.

Never before has the Church had more money, training and members than it has today; yet never has the Church done a poorer job in reaching the lost, proportionate to those resources. Why? Because we have been busy



doing *lesser* works instead of *greater* works than Jesus did.

Imagine two airplanes circling over your city, each one carrying a large sum of money in its cargo bay. One of the planes is carrying \$1 million in American pennies, or one-cent coins. The other plane carries the same amount in \$1,000 bills. Both planes dump their cargo over the city, leaving \$2 million scattered on the ground. You immediately organize two teams to see which one will collect a million dollars first. However, Team A confines their efforts to collecting only pennies, whereas Team B sets out to collect \$1,000 bills.

Which team will be noisier, take up more space, become more frustrated and end up writing books to explain why it can't be done? Team A, right? Yes, because they must find 100 million pennies to reach the goal. Team B, on the other hand, needs to find only a thousand \$1,000 bills to complete its task.

The Church needs to switch strategies. We must learn how to do greater works than Jesus did. And doing those works means praying for the felt needs of unbelievers and expecting miracles that will prove to them Jesus is the Son of God.

## A METHOD FOR REACHING CITIES

The apostle Paul also teaches about prayer evangelism in 1 Timothy 2:1-8, where he admonishes us to pray for everyone everywhere. However, to fully comprehend what Paul is talking about, we need to look at the context established in verse 15 of the previous chapter.

As you and I read our Bibles, it is easy to assume that the chapter divisions are divinely

inspired. This is not so. Except for the collected Psalms, the Holy Spirit did not divide any of the books into chapters. The insertion of chapter breaks was done by man and, sadly, these are often misleading. This is why 1 Timothy 2:1-8 is often thought to contain instructions on how to conduct prayer meetings in private. However, if we ignore the chapter division and begin to read in chapter 1, verse 15, we will see this passage in a different and far more exciting light.

Paul writes, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (v. 15). Paul is saying: "Timothy, this statement is so reliable that you can bank on it—that once exposed to it, everybody in your city is going to accept it." He is not saying that everybody will accept Jesus but, rather, that everybody will accept the truth that He came to save sinners. Paul is talking about the lost in Timothy's city, and he uses this statement as a preface to introduce a method for reaching all of them.

We often miss the evangelistic nature and focus of Paul's teaching because, moved by the realization that he is the greatest of sinners (see v. 16), Paul takes a praise detour: "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. 1:17). Unfortunately, some Bible editors see the word "amen" and wrongly assume that it provides a natural break in the text. As a result, many Bibles include a subtitle before the next verse, leaving us with the impression that Paul changes subjects. This is not the case.

In verse 18, Paul directs Timothy to keep a certain commandment that he may fight the good fight. What is the good fight? The good fight, in this context, is not so much a matter



of personal growth but, rather, the struggle to open the eyes of the lost to the fact that Jesus came into the world to save them. Paul is talking here about a strategy for reaching the lost; he is explaining to Timothy how to reach a city or a region for Christ.

## WHICH ONE IS THE COMMAND?

To equip Timothy to do this Paul gives him a command: “This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son . . . [so that] you may fight the good fight” (v. 18). Upon reading this we immediately begin to look for the command. Unfortunately, we wrongly conclude that the command can be found in one of only two verses, since chapter 1 is fast coming to an end. We discard verse 20, as it refers to Hymeneus and Alexander, who obviously had disobeyed the command. So we look to verse 19: “Keeping faith and a good conscience.” This is the command, right? To have a clean conscience in which to store up faith, because if we have faith nothing will be impossible for us?

No, Paul does not say, “*Keep* the faith and *keep* a good conscience,” which is how one gives a command. Instead, Paul uses the verb form “keeping.” We never tell our children, “*Going* to bed, *doing* your homework, and *being* nice to your brother.” No! We tell them, “*Go* to bed now, *do* your homework promptly, and *be* nice to your brother or else.” Paul is not giving a command in verse 19 but is describing the context in which the command is to be obeyed. He is saying to carry out the command from a position of holiness—thus the need for a clean conscience.

To find out what Paul’s command is, we need to look to the next chapter:

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men (1 Tim. 2:1).

The expressions “first of all” and “I urge” are intended to set the stage for the enunciation of something that should not be overlooked—obviously a command. What Paul is commanding is that the Church pray for everybody, everywhere. Why? Because God wants everybody to be saved:

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (vv. 3,4).

The compelling evidence for the evangelistic nature of the passage that begins in 1 Timothy 1:15 is undeniable.

Paul tells Timothy that by mobilizing the Church to pray for everybody in the city, they will ensure that all sinners will have an opportunity to know that Jesus came to save them. Paul is talking about organizing systematic prayer for the lost—what we now call prayer evangelism.

## CHANGE IN THE SPIRITUAL CLIMATE

Paul’s command also contains a promise:

I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity (1 Tim. 2:1,2).

The apostle indicates that if we pray for everybody, including those who are in authority, we will see a dramatic improvement in the spiritual climate around us; we will be

able to live tranquil lives in all godliness. Now, there is no way godliness can increase in our cities unless ungodliness decreases. There is no way we can live in quiet dignity unless our job is done and the good fight is won.

Paul confirms that the key to reaching the lost is to provide them with tangible proof that Jesus came to save them by meeting their felt needs through prayer—prayer as evangelism. This is how to reach cities the way the Early Church did it: not by relying on the skills of a few but by the whole Church’s modeling the whole gospel to the whole city through prayerful evangelism.

## TEXT WITHOUT ITS CONTEXT IS ONLY A PRETEXT

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

Reaching entire regions becomes feasible when we reexamine the Great Commission through the lens of prayer evangelism.



Let us take a closer look at Matthew 28:19. Here we see a command to go to all the nations to preach the gospel to everybody, to baptize them and to teach them everything Jesus taught us. This is a very tall order, to say the least. Who can do this and still hold a demanding secular job? Or be a good father or mother or even a pastor, with the time de-

mands each of these roles entails? Time and again, we find ourselves torn between the need to be a witness in the place where we are planted and the command to go someplace else to reach the lost. The hard reality is that after nearly 2,000 years of trying, we have not gotten the job done, since perhaps half of the world’s population has yet to hear that Jesus came to save all men.

Worse, a great number of those yet to be reached live in our cities—quite a few live in our own neighborhoods—and they show no signs of being reached anytime soon. What a tragedy! Why have we failed so miserably? The reason is that we have taken Matthew 28:19, the verse we consider to be at the heart of the Great Commission, out of context and, in so doing, we have developed a faulty methodology.

A text without its context becomes a pretext. When we look at this verse isolated from its context, the weight of fulfilling the Great Commission comes to rest exclusively on our shoulders. Our traditional understanding of this text is that it is we who must go and do the evangelizing, the teaching and the baptizing of so many. This is a crushing weight.

Now let us view this passage in its context by adding the two verses that precede and follow it:

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*” (Matt. 28:18-20, emphasis added).

Now, two powerful new components have come into the picture: First, Jesus has authority *everywhere*, in heaven and on Earth. This means there is not a single problem He cannot take care of or a single need He cannot meet. Second, He is with us all the time. If we replace “go” with “going,” as it appears in the original Greek, we see a dramatic shift in responsibility. Now the weight is no longer on our shoulders but is placed on the broad, matchless shoulders of Jesus. Jesus is saying, “As you go about your daily life, you will come across people who have needs. Just remember two things: I can take care of them, and I am right there next to you.” How are

we supposed to engage Him to meet their needs? “Ask Me anything in My name, [and] I will do it” (John 14:14). He is saying, “Don’t just talk about Me. Introduce Me to the lost by showing them my wonders.”

Jesus is not merely a message to be preached; He is a proactive Savior. He is ready to prove to the lost that He came into the world to save sinners by performing miracles when they need them the most. This is the heart of prayer evangelism and, when properly implemented, it is capable of doing much more than leading a few neighbors to the Lord. Prayer evangelism can change the spiritual climate over entire cities and regions.

## NOTE

1. Beverly Jaime and her husband, David, are associate pastors at Cathedral of Faith in San Jose, California.

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