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Recently I was sent to an area for six months of focused outreach in our ministry's Way Disciple outreach program. The area my team and I were sent to wasn't heavily populated. They didn't have a lot of the popular "hot spots" that I was used to frequenting in the cities I had lived in previously. But they did have places where people would congregate. One grocery store chain in particular was the source of a lot of good conversations and open doors to minister during our time there. However, there were times when our conversations weren't quite as "successful" in terms of making friends or inviting others to our next Bible study. But we continued to speak no matter what the responses were. Sometimes our Way Disciple team met several people who were interested in God's Word in a single day, and sometimes we went home after a day of focused outreach having met no interested people.

Regardless of the outcome, in reality we were always successful. What made us successful in our endeavors as "reconcilers" (II Corinthians 5:18) is that (1) we faithfully initiated conversations where people liked to meet, and (2) we continued to witness to others no matter how we were received by some. In this article, we'll investigate Paul's example of using these two keys to reach out.

The Apostle Paul's actions demonstrate that if you want to do well at anything, including leading others to Jesus Christ, you must put in faithful effort. He is a powerful example of how we can be successful in outreach by continuing to faithfully speak the Word to others each day.

Acts 17:17:

Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews [Judeans], and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

On a daily basis, Paul went to public areas, like the synagogue and the marketplace, where he could find people and initiate conversations. Paul "disputed" with those he

met—he reasoned with them. He conversed with them. He opened a dialogue, he listened carefully to his audience, and he presented the truth concerning Christ. Paul was able to reach others with the Word because he built a habit of initiating conversations.

Paul didn't just make a habit of reconciling others when the responses were favorable, though. He continued to speak God's Word to others no matter what kind of response he received.

Acts 19:8,9:

And he [Paul] went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

Many did not like what Paul had to say in the synagogues of Ephesus, and they showed their unbelief by speaking against Paul and the disciples. Rather than continuing to speak to these people, Paul simply removed himself from the situation, taking with him the disciples—those who had proven themselves faithful to believe God's Word. Then, he continued to speak the Word in the school of Tyrannus. The result of continuing to witness despite the negative reception was staggering. Acts 19:20 states that the resulting impact was that the Word of God “mightily grew” and “prevailed.”

When my Way Disciple team and I were out in public areas sharing the truth of God's Word, sometimes the reactions of others were less than favorable. At times, we were tempted to get discouraged. Our leadership at one point shared this with us about success in outreach: “The success of outreach isn't in the response you receive, but in whether or not you spoke God's Word.” Clearly, Paul knew where the success of outreach truly lies. He continued to speak out no matter what the response was.

The Apostle Paul left us a wonderful example of how to reconcile others back to God. He took every opportunity he had to get out where the people were, open conversations, and bring them to the delivering truths about Jesus Christ. He exercised his ministry of reconciliation no matter the reaction, and as a result, the Word prevailed. We can grow in our capacity to lead others to Christ as we follow Paul's example of staying faithful and persistent in reaching out to others.

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