



EVANGELISM & SOCIAL ACTION

This month we want to wrestle with the issue of how do we balance evangelism and social action? Many churches have fallen into one of two ditches: evangelism without social action or social actions without evangelism. It is easy to lose focus and get caught in one or the other, but the heart of Jesus is that we do both! A few months ago, I shared about the “3” in R3ACH and this could be called a continuation on that theme!

Our heart with R3ACH is to reach the WHOLE person, with the WHOLE gospel. In Luke 4:18-19 as Jesus gives his mission statement, there are 3 parts to it: Salvation, Compassion and Justice. So, through R3ACH, we seek to reach the WHOLE person with the WHOLE gospel. Hence, the letter “3” :)

Featured this month is part of an article from Relevant Magazine written by Dr. Ron Sider, considered by many to be the father of the modern Christian social justice movement. I hope you will find this article as inspiring and challenging as I did. The article covers four challenges to this generation and is a great read. We will only cover the first challenge of his letter, the part regarding evangelism and social action, but if you want to read the article in its fullness, go to http://www.relevantmagazine.com/digital_issue/50. The article is found on page 57-60.

Towards the end, Ron makes a strong biblical case of what is at stake regarding eternity; about heaven and hell. Some of you might be familiar with the recent debate regarding Rob Bell’s new book on the issue, where **Bell’s core theme is that Christians have been too narrow in their view of God and His mercy. He argues that God loves people too much to banish them to hell.* That’s not the Bible, and I must say that I wholeheartedly agree with Sider on this cornerstone in the Christian faith! (*To read a review of Bell’s book visit: <http://tinyurl.com/68dusxh>)**

Enjoy the article and I hope you will be refreshingly challenged and stirred to passion to take the Whole Gospel to our world!

For the Kingdom,
Sam Sandén

HOW TO BE INVOLVED

Our vision is to see the body of Christ mobilized, becoming the very hands and feet of Jesus! Therefore we need you!!

Our heart is to provide you with opportunities to get involved on a number of levels, bringing you updates of the needs in the world around us and to help create a passion for you to become a world changer, right where you are at!

Therefore, here are some of the ways you can get involved!

- Get involved through serving through the various opportunities we have right here at Fathers House, such as being part of our outreaches or joining us on a mission trip! (See the latest resource flyer for info.)
- Stay in touch via Facebook: (facebook.com/r3ach.usa) and/or sign up for the newsletter on our website (R3ACH.org) to stay in tune with the ministry
- Support R3ACH through prayer and giving.
- Start supporting local, national and international ministries through prayer and giving of your time and resources. (See our resource flyer for more info.)
- Take a stand for Justice in your World as the Lord leads and opens doors.

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 26th, R3ACH PDX

Lemonade & Sandwich Homeless Outreach.

JULY 30th-AUGUST 8th: - VITALIZE '11 Los Angeles

Dream Center Mission

SPRING 2012 – Mission Trip to Uganda

R3ACH is the missions/outreach ministry of Fathers House Church, Longview, WA
To find out how you can be part of what is going on, visit us on the web at
www.fathershousechurch.com , www.R3ACH.org or www.facebook.com/r3ach.usa

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EVANGELISM

AN OPEN LETTER TO THIS GENERATION

By Ron Sider

ARE YOU IN DANGER OF NEGLECTING EVANGELISM IN YOUR PASSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE?

You know how much I affirm your commitment to justice for the poor and your rejection of an evangelism that focuses only on the “soul” and neglects people’s needs. I have spent much of my life arguing on biblical grounds for precisely these concerns. But I have also watched some Christian “social activists” lose their concern for evangelism.

Evangelism and social action are inseparable. They are two sides of the same coin. But they are not identical. Working for economic development in poor communities or structural change to end systemic oppression is not the same as inviting persons who do not now confess Christ to embrace Him as Lord and Savior. If we only do social action and never say we do it because of Christ, our good deeds only point to ourselves and make us look good.

The Bible clearly teaches that persons are both material and spiritual beings. Scripture and human experience show sin is personal and social; social brokenness (including poverty) results both from wrong personal choices and unjust structures. If we only work at half the problem, we only produce half a solution. People need both personal faith in Christ that transforms their values and very person, and material, structural transformation that brings new socioeconomic opportunities. That is why holistic evangelical community development programs that truly combine evangelism and social action (think of John Perkins and the Christian Community Development Association) work better now in this life.

But persons are made for far more than a good life here on Earth for 60 to 100 years. Every person is invited to live forever with the living God. Jesus died so whoever believes in Him may have a better life now *and* life eternal.

Two other biblical truths are crucial. Jesus is the only way to salvation, and those who continue to reject Christ depart eternally from the living God. I know my generation has sometimes said these things in a harsh, insensitive ways.

Too often we have failed to say with the Bible that God doesn’t want anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9)

But if the Bible is our norm, we dare not neglect its teaching that people are lost without Christ (Eph 2:12, 1 Thess 1:9). Jesus (certainly the most amazing teacher of love the world has ever known) says more about eternal separation from the living God than anyone in the Bible (Mt 25:41; Mt 13:41-42, 49-50; Mt 18:8). Surely, if Jesus is true God as well as true man, we cannot act as if He did not know what He was talking about.

Instead, we should embrace his claim that He is the way, the truth and the life; “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6 NIV). For as Peter said at Pentecost, there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. (Acts 4:12)

Of course, there are tough questions about things like those who have never heard or eternal punishment. (I wrestle with those in the chapter on evangelism in my *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel*.) But for most of Church history, Christians have believed and taught the biblical affirmation that, apart from Christ, people are lost eternally. Those parts of the modern church that have abandoned these truths have declined disastrously.

So I gently but clearly, ask you to wrestle with the question: Do you care as much about lovingly inviting non-Christians to embrace the Savior as you do about social justice? Is there any danger that this generation of Christian social activists will repeat the one-sidedness of the old social gospel and neglect evangelism? Will this generation of young Christians spend as much time, money and effort praying and strategizing about how to winsomely invite non-Christians to come to Christ as they do working for social justice?