

As we sat talking on my deck, Jim's comment snagged my attention. "What's really important to me is to live a margined life." The term puzzled me.

"What's a margined life?" I asked.

"A margined life is having enough margin in my schedule to be available for people when they're available. I want people to feel they're welcomed and not interruptions."

"Wow!" I thought to myself, "I'm a long way from this type of life."

The most precious commodity for us today is time. We're a culture of multi-taskers, with our ears glued to cell phones and our hands busily text-messaging friends. We run from event-to-event, with little margin in our lives.

Peter Scazzerro writes that a "pervasive form of contemporary violence is activism and overwork . . . it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful." Not only is godly wisdom killed, but without time relationships wither on the vine. Insiders think differently. They're margined people, with ample time to invest in relationships.

In our evangelism workshop, we ask people to identify how much time they have to spend with non-Christian friends. Jeff looked at his schedule and made a discovery, "I only have one evening this month to spend with non-Christian friends. I'm either involved with family, my church activities, or Christian friends." Jeff's invested in the Christian world.

Time has become one of the church's primary hindrances to effective evangelism. We fill our evenings with volunteer opportunities and meetings, leaving little margin to invest in the lives of our non-Christian friends. We're building the church at the expense of the gospel. Jesus lived life differently.

John Stott noted that "The church is the only cooperative society in the world that exists for the benefits of its nonmembers." Jesus demonstrated this commitment. Our Lord effortlessly made Himself available to interruptions (Matthew 9:1,2), requests for healings (Matthew 15:22), social gatherings (John 2:1,2), and meals with "sinners" (Luke 5:29). One author writes that "If you want to win this world to Christ, you are going to have to sit in the smoking section." How can we get started?

My friend Tyler has made a simple commitment, "If a non-Christian friend invites me to do something with him socially, I drop whatever I'm doing to spend time with him." Peggy and I scan our neighborhood to see when people are available and schedule ourselves to be available at the same time. This goal is increasingly hard to keep. The demands of church and the pull of service to the Christian world gobbles up our margins.

Insiders know how to live margined lives. When we live life2life with people, we make ourselves available to them on their terms not on our own. Sometimes Lordship is demonstrated by scheduling nothing so we're available when people call.