

LIVING *Life2Life*

Re-imagining church through the power of relationships. Volume 1 | Issue 6

A recent study of five-hundred adult converts in Great Britain revealed an interesting finding. Sixty-nine percent of these adults described their Christian conversion as a gradual event. Only twenty percent described their experience as dramatic or radical. What does this tell us about evangelism?

The researchers concluded that this gradual process is the way most people discover God. The average time taken was about four years. In that time, the gospel message was repeatedly shared and affirmed by others. Someone was constantly present, talking and showing the good news of Jesus. Insiders were practicing the power of presence.

Presence means being physically present in one place for a period of time. Presence also speaks of one's bearing or demeanor. When we say, "There's a presence about that person," we're describing a manner of life.

Jesus practiced this power of presence; He became flesh and blood and had a presence that touched those who associated with Him. *The Message* wonderfully translates Jesus' presence this way, "The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes." (John 1:14). The Son of God chose not to isolate Himself from a hurting and sinful humanity. Instead, He moved into their neighborhoods to eat with, listen to, and lovingly serve, becoming a "friend of sinners" (Matthew 11:19).

In a survey conducted by *The Discipleship Journal*, researchers found that the average adult convert extracts himself or herself from the majority of their non-Christian friends within a period of six months. This extraction violates the power of presence, limiting the gospel's influence.

We're present in a wonderful intersection of relational circles. These circles include our friends in the PTA and soccer league, doctors and daughters-in-law, salesclerks and auto mechanics, and the neighbors next door. In each circle, God is calling us to have both a physical presence and a quality of life presence for Jesus' sake. Author Anne Lamott highlights the power of presence when she writes,

I believe that when all is said and done, all you can do is to show up . . . which seems so inadequate. But when you do, it radically changes everything. Your there-ness can be life-giving, because everyone else is often hiding.

Let's be honest. It's easier to hide than to be present with people. How would you assess your power of presence for Christ? Here are some questions:

- Do I take time to be present with people through common activities?
- Am I present with people in their celebrations, crises, or conflicts?
- How well do I know the hopes and fears, dreams and failures, of people around me?
- Do I have a multi-dimensional social life, being present with non-Christian and Christian friends?

Living life2life means living like Jesus, moving into the neighborhoods of people's lives, practicing the power of presence. As an insider, ask God to help your presence serve a need or start a faith conversation with someone today.

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