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Surfacing Souls for Christ

Antiques Road Show is one of my favorite television programs. On the show people bring their odds and ends to be evaluated by experts. Many times the items were bought in flea markets or junk shops for just a few dollars. Sometimes they had been neglected in the attic, and sometimes they had been sitting unnoticed in a corner, or hanging on a dark wall. Often the owner didn't think the item had much value, but as soon as the expert sees it, his eyes light up. He thanks the owner for bringing it in, and tells him that he has a "national treasure." The expert sees the item for what it really is: something precious and desirable.

Surfacing souls for Christ is a little bit like that. Precious souls are all around us, and with 6.5 billion souls in this world we don't have far to look. It could be the person who cuts our hair or delivers our mail. We need to be soul-conscious. We need to open our eyes. We need to realize the value of what we're seeing as God does.

Let's take a look at some productive sources of souls with whom to share the abundant life.

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THROUGH THE CHURCH DIRECTORY

A good place to start looking for souls is the church directory. Go through the directory with the elders or with an older member who knows the congregation. Look first for children of members or children in Sunday School who are old enough to be baptized.

There are a couple of cautions to be aware of when working with children. First, get the parents' permission before working with their children.

Second, be careful with children under twelve years old. Statistics indicate that children prior to that age tend not to remain as faithful as those baptized at age twelve or older. Generally speaking, however, this is one of the most productive groups available to us.

A second group that can be surfaced through the church directory is relatives of members, including non-member mates. These are good prospects, especially if they are attending services. If they are attending services, you can approach them after services using the two-step approach that will be discussed in a later lesson. Otherwise, they can be visited in their homes with the member accompanying you, or you can have them in your home and approach them at that time. I've never worked for a congregation where we didn't baptize numerous souls in this group.

A third category that can be surfaced through the directory are delinquent members. As we shall see, many in this group can be led back to Jesus; we will talk about them in a separate lesson.

THROUGH THE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Friends of members would be the first group in this category. We could also include relatives who are not in the directory. This is a good method: I myself was

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reached in this manner, and so was my wife.

To reach people in this category, we can get the members to invite their friends and relatives to services, fellowships, and other events. We can talk to them using the two-step approach which we will discuss in the next lesson. We also can get the members to submit the names of friends and relatives and then go with the member to visit them. Don't forget to include the friends and relatives of newly baptized members in this group. Every time a soul is baptized a whole new circle of prospects is opened up for the Lord.

Weddings and funerals are also great soul-surfacing occasions. This is because these events usually bring non-members into the church facilities on an occasion when people are often thinking about the deeper issues of life.

THROUGH CHURCH SERVICES

Visitors to services, gospel meetings, life groups, VBS, and other events are excellent prospects. If somebody has taken the initiative to visit the church, they are showing evidence of interest. Don't let them slip through your fingers! If we would just *visit the visitors*, we would lead many souls to Christ. It is best to approach visitors immediately after services using a two-step approach. If we don't manage to talk to these visitors after services, it is important to visit them in their home within two days.

The importance of visiting the visitor is demonstrated by the experience of an individual I know. He moved to a town in which there were several congregations of the Lord's church. He visited every one of those congregations. He filled out visitor cards, left a record of this attendance, and left his address and phone

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number. Yet nobody from any of those congregations paid him a personal visit. He received a couple of cards thanking him for his attendance, but nobody did better than that. We must visit the visitors!

Because visitors are such a good source, the church should take action to increase the number of visitors. This can include: (1) having a high profile in the community by having notices in the newspapers and phone books and signs pointing to the building; (2) having attractive facilities, bright and enthusiastic services, spirited singing, a friendly atmosphere, good infrastructure to the church, and good greeters and ushers who are looking out for visitors; (3) having lots of activities that attract visitors such as fellowships, sermons on topics of interest, benevolence, ministries to the community; and special events of all kinds. (4) Making sure that everything is well publicized and that everything the church does is mentioned in the local media is also important. (5) Also, encourage members to invite friends and relatives to these activities. (6) Another way to encourage visitors is to have regular mailings of publications such as House to House, Heart to Heart, into every home in the community. This mail out could include details of the local congregation.

THROUGH THE COMMUNITY

To surface souls through the local community, here is a two-step approach that uses *Into the Abundant Life*:

1. Go from house to house, or to friends and neighbors, or to casual daily contacts, and present the book (we will talk about how to introduce the book in the next lesson).
2. Follow-up with a visit two weeks later, at which

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time you can begin to share the “Guide to Eternal Life” (we will discuss this in a future lesson).

Here is a two-step approach that uses a Bible correspondence course:

1. Give or send the first lesson in the Bible correspondence course.
2. Go back and visit the person after he has completed the course or after a couple of weeks if he doesn't send in the lesson. Begin sharing the “Guide to Eternal Life” on the follow-up visit. We need to note that we still visit the students even if they don't send in any lessons for grading. Many people who never sent in a lesson have been baptized.

Here is a two-step approach for contacting newcomers to the area:

1. Visit the newcomers, and give them a welcome packet from the church with appropriate gifts and a copy of *Into the Abundant Life*. Introduce the book, and invite them to worship services or into your home.
2. Make a follow-up visit, and share the “Guide to Eternal Life.”

Here is a two-step approach for contacting those in jails, hospitals, nursing homes, and retirement homes:

1. Have a friendly visit with them, and give them a copy of the *Into the Abundant Life* book.
2. Follow-up with them as in the previous approach.

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EXERCISE

1. Make a list of all the souls you can think of from the sources mentioned above. Remember that even though you may not think you have any prospects, most congregations are surrounded by a pool of unreaped souls from the sources discussed. Write down the names of those people of whom you are thinking. Include details such as addresses, phone numbers, religious affiliation, and any other helpful information. This information can be recorded on a contact card, samples of which can be downloaded from the website.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Pray for the souls whose names are on your list. Keep that list in a handy place; keep those names ever before you.