

The Most Excellent Way

During our evangelism conferences, when we touch on Jesus' compassionate response in the feeding of the 5,000, the question we usually anticipate is "How do we learn to react in the way Jesus did?" However, this last Thursday an unanticipated ques-



tion was raised; a student asked: "Should we act compassionately first and then preach, or should we preach first and then display acts of compassion?" He was trying to understand what stance we should take in the debate between presenting evangelism as a moment of decision or what some call the "social gospel."

The question illustrates the danger of thinking in predefined categories. It can cause us to limit our outreaches to traditional activities like preaching, teaching, and passing out tracts while avoiding food distribution or medical clinics in an attempt to show our emphasis on "telling the good news," or it can cause us to add mandatory evangelistic events to our social outreach in order to justify the undertaking.

But separating compassion and preaching/teaching into separate categories should make us ask the questions: "Is our preaching without compassion?" and "Is social outreach condemned or considered second-class by scripture?" Obviously the answer to both questions is no. The real question, therefore, should not be, "How should our evangelism look?" but

rather, "How should our evangelism be motivated?"

Returning to the passage in question (Mark 6:30-44) we see that Jesus' taught and fed the needy crowd. There was no separation of his actions into evangelistic and social. Rather, compassion motivated him to meet need before him.

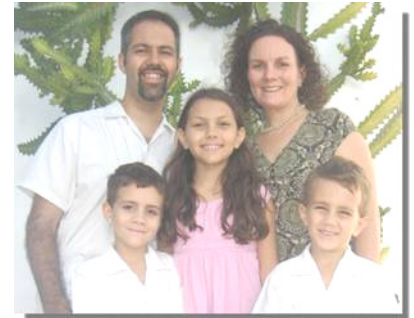
Interchanging the word compassion for love can perhaps clarify the point. Paul, in trying to settle church division in Corinth, culminates his argument for unity with the famous love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13, in which he introduces love as "the most excellent way." In his opening words, he lists both "spiritual" and "compassionate" acts as worthless without love. It's little wonder then that 1 John 4:12 says that we would be known to be true, not for our excellent Bible teaching or for our hospital building, but rather for our love, and it is fitting because love, when perfectly applied led to eternal life, (Jn 3:16).



Our answer then to our students is that reaching out to a lost world in love enables us to push past the limitation of categories. Ultimately it allows us to utilize the appropriate means to communicate God's grace, be it through a cup of cold water or an offer to pray the sinner's prayer.

Learning and encouraging the most excellent way here in the Yucatán,

—The Godzwa Family



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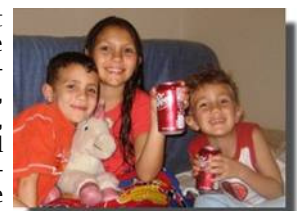
We're a year removed from our iteration cycle starting August of 2009. Would you like us to visit your church?:

- Write or e-mail us with two suggested dates during or after August of 2009
- We'll confirm your request with a telephone call or e-mail.

It's that simple!

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Just because Rebeccah, Joseph, and Jonathan are some



incredibly adaptable MKs doesn't mean that they don't enjoy a taste of the States from time to time. Here they are with a rare find here in Mexico, Dr. Pepper!