



Building Friendships for Eternity

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SESSION 1 – INTRODUCING FRIENDFLUENCE

WE NEED KINGDOM FRIENDS

FriendFluence: Actively pursuing relationships with people in order to win them to Christ, build them in faith and send them back into the world to influence others.

Chris Christian is deeply concerned for the lost. He has a sense of urgency about him. He looks for every opportunity that the Lord gives him to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Chris doesn't just wait for the people to come to him however – he goes to where they are. He believes in pursuing relationships with the lost in order to influence them for Christ.

FriendFluence is vital to the health and growth of the local church.

Chris joined the local non-church softball league just to meet and build relationships with lost people. So far, he has led two of his teammates to Christ and they are active in church. He is very interested in the lives of his co-workers down at the plant. In fact, when Sam Skeptic was out of work for two weeks because of an accident, Chris mowed the lawn for Sam. He shared the good news with Sam and his wife and offered to help him in any way he could.

He and his wife Karen know each of the neighbors in their subdivision by name. They make an effort to speak to them as they prayer walk through their neighborhood in the evenings. Just the other day, they stopped to pray with Mr. Paul Prospect because his wife was having some medical tests conducted. They were able to allay Mr. Prospect's fears and share some appropriate Bible verses with him. On Sunday, Mr. Prospect and his wife came to church for the first time in 10 years.

On the fourth of July, Chris and Karen threw a block party and invited all of their neighbors. They took time to get to know each of their guests and gave them a copy of the “Jesus” video as a thank you gift. Their neighbors couldn’t believe that someone in their town could be so generous. Chris and Karen also invited all their guests to church and Sunday School. Most of their guests said they already had plans, but that did not discourage Chris. He continued to witness to them as much as possible

Chris and Karen sound a little too good to be true. However, I have met people like them and know they are real. They are active in their pursuit of lost people and go where the lost are. They are sensitive to the opportunities that God gives them to reach people for Christ. These people make a difference in other’s lives because of their commitment to influence the lost for Christ.

A friend of mine named Mike, who happens to be a vocational evangelist, is a volunteer chaplain for his local sheriff’s department. He took basic law enforcement training and has been deputized as an officer. He receives no paycheck from the sheriff’s department and rides with the deputies on their patrols.

Mike works the same 12-hour shifts as they work and chases the same criminals that they chase. Sometimes when he is preaching, he pulls out his bulletproof vest as a sermon illustration. Some of the deputies can’t understand why Mike would do what he does for them. He does it to reach them for Christ.

Another friend named Marty Dupree, who works for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, looks for every opportunity to share the good news. Whenever he goes out to a restaurant, he always builds rapport with the wait staff and the cashier. He takes time to ask for

their name and shares a Bible tract with them. He and his family have made an effort to get to know their neighbors as they prayer walk the neighborhood. They are available to minister to their neighbors needs and share the gospel as God allows.

Recently, my wife and I attended a conference in Daytona Beach, Florida. We were being trained to develop financial partners for our ministry. One of our assignments was to go



out for dinner with a conference partner and practice our presentations. As we sat down to order, our waiter came to give us our menus. I asked him for his name and introduced everyone at the table. His name was Kyle – not his real name – and he was a college student.

My wife asked him if he had any prayer requests that we could pray for as we blessed our food. He wanted us to pray for his academic life as he was trying to transfer to another college. We prayed for him as he left to place our order. Throughout the meal, I continued to ask him questions including those about his spiritual life.

Every time he would come to check on us or refill our beverages, I would share the good news with him. By the end of the meal, Kyle had trusted Christ. I gave him my New Testament and turned his contact information over to a local church for follow up.

These are just a few real life examples of what I call FriendFluence. **FriendFluence is the active pursuit of relationships with people in order to win them to Christ, build them in faith and send them back into the world to influence others.** As believers in Jesus Christ, we should always be looking to influence others toward the Kingdom of God.

FriendFluence is vital to the health and growth of the local church. Today, many believers have insulated themselves in a cocoon of casual Christianity. As a result, they have isolated themselves from the lost world. If we are going to share the good news of Jesus Christ, we have to know people to share the good news with. FriendFluence helps believers reestablish ties with the lost world.

Jesus practiced FriendFluence. He was noted for being a friend of sinners and tax collectors. He moved in their circles yet he did not live as they lived. Almost all of the encounters that Jesus had with people were outside of the church. J. K. Johnson wrote:

“Christ met unbelievers where they were. He realized what many Christians today still don't seem to understand. Cultivators have to get out in the field. According to one count, the gospels record 132 contacts that Jesus had with people. Six were in the Temple, four in the synagogues and 122 were out with the people in the mainstream of life.” J.K.

Johnston, Why Christians Sin, Discovery House, 1992, p. 142.

Would that we follow Jesus example in befriending the lost! We need to rethink the way we do evangelism and relate to the lost world. The world will no longer come to us; we must go to them with the good news. That is why FriendFluence was born. FriendFluence seeks to move the church out of its comfort zone and back into the world.

Quick Quiz

1. I believe it is very important to reach people with the gospel.
Disagree, Agree Somewhat, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree. (Circle one)
2. I believe that I have a personal responsibility to share the gospel with others.
Disagree, Agree Somewhat, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree. (Circle one)
3. How many close relationships, except for family, do you have with people outside of the church? _____
4. When someone new visits the church, I _____
5. When I am around lost people, I feel _____
6. Name one person that you have pursued a relationship with in order to win them to faith in Christ within the last year. _____.
7. The most important duty of my pastor is: _____
8. When I think of the church, I think of: _____
9. If you were to look for a new church, what qualities would you look for?

SCRIPTURES RELATED TO FRIENDFLUENCE

1st Corinthians 9:19-22

Luke 14:16-24

Matthew 28:19-20

How do these scriptures relate to actively pursuing relationships with the lost in order to win them to Christ, build them in faith and send them back into the world to influence others? _____

THE STATE OF OUR RELATIONS

DISCUSSION QUESTION: In your opinion, how important are relationships in winning people to faith in Christ?

Today, most church members are anemic when it comes to pursuing relationships with people in order to win them to Christ. Churches with empty pews and rundown classrooms serving as extra storage space testify to this fact. The average Christian has few or no close relationships outside of their family or church members. In fact, many Christians feel uncomfortable around the lost. It seems that the longer people are Christians, the fewer people they know outside of church circles.

Recently, I met with a retired couple who are very faithful to their church. I asked them what they thought kept people from entering into a relationship with Christ today. The wife gave an answer that I am used to hearing – “selfishness” on the part of the lost person. Later, she mentioned that when she was working, she knew several people who were lost. Now that she had retired, she said that she did not know any lost people and felt uncomfortable around them.

A native once told a missionary, "You built a bridge of love between your heart and my heart and Jesus walked over."

When researchers asked new converts, "What was the **major** influence in leading you to Christ and the Church?" they responded:

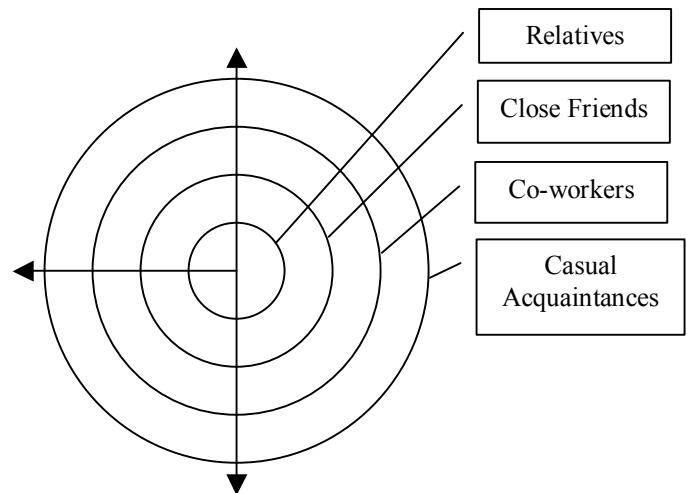
Church advertising 2%
The Pastor 6%
Organized evangelism programs 6%
Friends and relatives 86%

[Adapted from "Evangelism: The Why and How" by Elmer L. Towns, in Church Growth State of the Art, C. Peter Wagner, ed. (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1988), p. 53.]

Yet to many outsiders and lost people, friendliness and relationships play a part in their decision to attend a church. A native once told a missionary, "**You built a bridge of love between your heart and my heart and Jesus walked over.**" I can think of no better description of FriendFluence than that! The church must become intentional about pursuing vital relationships with the lost. Without such concern, we can only expect to see once vibrant churches become decaying institutional hulks housing hardened saints.

TAKE ACTION

Take out your FriendFluence card that you received with this package. Namestorm at least 10-12 people that you know who don't know Christ in your **circle of influence**. Write their names in the box below. Pick 3-5 that you know you can build a relationship with in order to win them to Christ, build them in faith, and send them back into the world to influence others. Record their names on the FriendFluence card. Begin to pray for them daily asking God to show you how best to reach them with the good news.



CHURCHES AND THEIR ATTITUDES

Churches can be typed according to their effectiveness in pursuing Kingdom relationships. **By Kingdom relationships, I am referring to relationships with others initiated for the purpose of influencing people for Christ.** A Christian’s most important work is to share the good news of Jesus Christ. God has chosen us as His representatives. 2nd Peter 1:9-10 says:

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” 2nd Peter 1:9-10 NKJV

It is a privilege and calling from God to influence and win others to Christ. We show mercy to others because He showed mercy to us through Jesus Christ.

The following table shows how different churches respond to Kingdom relationship building. I will introduce these types now, and detail them in later chapters.

Observations About Churches and Their Attitudes - Table 1

Kingdom Impact			
Church Type			
	Inward Focused Church	Friendly Church	Friendfluential Church
Characteristic Most important relationships Attitude toward outsiders Attitude toward lost Who initiates relationships View of pastor View of the Church Growth experienced	Family Closed Hostile/indifferent People in church Chaplain Church is a building None/small	Church friends Guarded, eventually accepting Concerned Outsider Evangelist Church is the people Mostly from transfers	Kingdom friends Open Concerned and active People in church Equipper Church is The Kingdom New growth

As a church moves toward becoming more Kingdom oriented, it places more value on relationship building with the lost. This means the primary focus moves from self to building the Kingdom of God for His glory.

Unfortunately many so called “family churches” fall into the Inward Focused category. The moniker “family” church is actually considered a badge of honor by some. These churches perceive themselves to be friendly and outreach oriented, but in reality they are far from being that. I realize that I have turned some of you off by insulting the concept of the family church. But the truth needs to be clearly stated. Sometimes, change only comes through challenge. This type of church has negligible impact on the Kingdom of God and is not healthy by Biblical standards.

Is this an issue of church size and numbers? No. A church can be small and still be FriendFluential. The difference is in whom they are reaching. Are they simply casting a line in the aquarium or deep-sea fishing? FriendFluential churches are deep-sea fishers. They pound the pavement and beat the bushes and hedgerows. They take risks. And, God uses them.

What about Friendly Churches? They have a few things going for them. They do reach some people. First of all, they have a greater potential of becoming FriendFluential. With the right leadership, they can be nudged off center toward greater kingdom impact. Unfortunately, they can easily slide back toward the other direction. Second, they have not lost sight of the great commission like the Inward Focused church. They still want to reach the lost – usually through a proxy i.e. the pastor. And, they do allow others into their circle (with effort.)

The FriendFluential church makes an impact on the Kingdom of God and the community because it intentionally seeks to find and win the lost. It is made up of people who have changed

their attitude toward their place in God's plan to evangelize the world. God is on mission to redeem the lost and invites all of us to join him in that mission. The members of the FriendFluential church have caught a vision for this important mission. They have set aside their own desires and plans to be a part of God's greater plan. And God uses them to touch people from all walks of life.

A GREAT CHALLENGE

The challenge that is before us is to move the church toward the direction of greatest Kingdom impact. We must see how important it is to actively pursue relationships with people in order to win them to Christ, build them in faith and send them back into the world to influence others. Understanding this importance is the only way this change is going to happen. This is FriendFluence. It is a combination of the words "friend" and "influence."

When we think of the word "friend," we think of acquaintances that we have met along the road of life. Our friends range from casual contacts to best buds. We call some friends on the phone on a regular basis and others we barely hear from at Christmas. Friends come and go with time and distance. So it hardly seems appropriate to use this term.

For our purpose, the idea of friendship has a deeper meaning. In the book of Proverbs, Jesus is described as a friend that sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24.) We also see that a friend loves at all times (Proverbs 17:17.) So Biblically-based friendships are characterized by loyalty and love. We express the same kind of unconditional love toward our friends that God showed for us through the cross. It is friendship on a higher plane.

To influence someone is to sway his or her opinions and way of thinking. For our purposes it involves living a Christ-like life before others while actively seeking to win, build and send them. Influence does not happen overnight. It involves building a trust relationship and that takes an investment of time. It has been well said that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Compassion is the key to having influence.

FriendFluence doesn't happen overnight either. We are so uncomfortable – even resistant – to change. Old habits die hard. Prejudices exist. Busyness rules our life. For the most part, people in today's world are introverted. We isolate ourselves even from our closest neighbors and family.

If you want to see the attitudes of people in your church change, it is going to take much prayer and patience. Resistance will come. Change will be slow. You will be frustrated. But the struggle is worth it if it leads to a greater harvest of souls. Press forward. Celebrate the victories and learn from the losses.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

On a scale of one to ten, at what point do you see your church now in terms of these three church models? Circle the number below and be ready to tell why.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Inward Focused
Church

Friendly
Church

FriendFluential
Church

What can be done to make your church more FriendFluential?

SESSION 2 – CHURCH TYPES

THE INWARD FOCUSED CHURCH

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”- John 15:5 NKJV.

The church is an organism, not an organization. It lives to serve Christ and it breathes in the Spirit of the Living God. If it is healthy, it grows and expands. Without new growth, it will die off. Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”- John 15:5 NKJV. (i.e. Nothing of eternal significance happens without a connection to Jesus.) The Inward Focused church has lost its connection to the vine. It has taken its eyes off of Jesus and focused on its own wants and desires. Pleasing the membership becomes the goal.

This inward focus brings with it a set of attitudes that limit or even hinder the working of the Holy Spirit through the people of God to reach the lost with the good news. Changing these attitudes is about as easy as pulling eye teeth. It is truly a task that takes much prayer and lots of time. Here are some of the attitudes found in the Inward Focused Church.

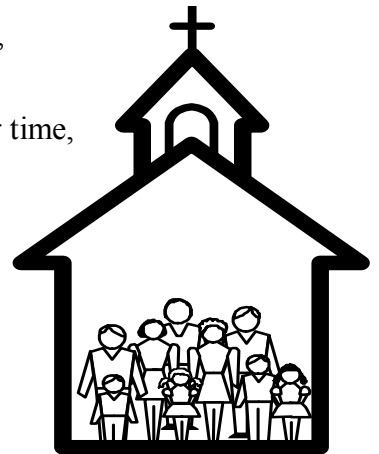
THE MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS

There is a good reason why the Inward Focused Church is also called the family church: most of the people in this type of church are blood related! Sometimes, this phenomenon is a throw back to the horse and buggy days when people did not travel great distances. Churches were planted in close proximity to one another to serve the community. Regional churches that

attracted people from the larger area – within a 30 mile radius – didn't exist. These churches were served by circuit riding preachers that worked a multi-church field.

At that time, church was considered a normal part of life. It was a positive social event in the life of the community. Discipline was exercised in the church and fulfillment of church obligations by the membership was expected. Attendance was “mandatory.”

Therefore, these churches were able to have a big impact in their time. Over time, with the influence of an increasingly secular society, these churches relaxed their discipline and consequently lost their influence with the families of the church.



Many of these churches are still dominated by a handful of families.

As my wife says about my home church, you are either a Davis, Taylor or Britton or you used to be one. The priority of the Inward Focused Church becomes baptizing the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of the membership. Very few outsiders ever come to the church because the members only reach out to their own family or the families in the church. In this type of church, you will often hear, “Pray for my son, daughter, brother, cousin and so forth. They are out of church and need Jesus.” Rarely do you hear, “Pray for my neighbor, co-worker or the guy down the street. They are lost.”

THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD OUTSIDERS

In the Inward Focused Church, the door of the church building may be open to the outside world, but the hearts of the members are closed. This does not necessarily mean that an outsider will be confronted at the door with “sorry, you are not welcome here.” What it does mean is that the outsider will not be encouraged to return in a passive way. This is especially

true if the outsider is *different* (e.g.: an African American in an Anglo church, a lower socioeconomic level than the average church member).

This passive resistance may mean that the outsider is not warmly greeted by those attending the service that day. They may not receive a follow-up visit in the home from the visitation team. They may get a dirty look for sitting in sister Sarah's favorite pew (or even be asked to move). There will be whispers and hushed questions asked. In any case, the behaviors will be subtle but the results of the behaviors will be dramatic.

THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LOST

In the Inward Focused Church, if a church member is diagnosed with cancer or some debilitating disease, there will be a huge outpouring of support for the patient. Visits will be made, food cooked, and offers to drive the patient to medical appointments will abound. (Certainly, this is a good thing.) However, if Joe Heathen down the street is lost and dying of a terminal spiritual disease called sin, no one will visit or bring the bread of life to him or offer to drive him to church. He will be left to find a cure on his own. There is an unspoken expectation that the lost person has the responsibility to make the first move toward Christ. I have heard it succinctly put by a Baptist deacon, "They know where we are. They'll come if they want to."

Sometimes, Joe will be viewed as the enemy. Gossip will spring up like dandelions in the spring time. His actions will be critiqued. He will be shunned. This is because of the fact that the members of the Inward Focused church fail to realize that lost people act lost. The lost are not going to live holy lives because

The lost are not going to live holy lives because they are not capable of living holy lives.

they are not capable of living holy lives. "The natural man does not receive the things of the

Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to Him...” (1 Cor. 2:14 NKJV)

So the attitude toward the lost in this type of church will be indifference or even open hostility.

WHO INITIATES RELATIONSHIPS

If an outsider is accepted into an Inward Focused Church, it will be due to the fact that someone in the church took the time to establish a relationship with the person. If the outsider tries to initiate a relationship with a member, he or she may get the cold shoulder. At best, he or she may be able to have some surface relationships with people, but they will likely not be included in the intimate activities of the member friend. (i.e. family dinners, birthday parties and etc.) Those activities are reserved for family.

HOW DO THEY VIEW THE PASTOR

The role and function of the pastor in the Inward Focused Church is that of a Chaplain. He will be expected to visit the sick and shut-ins, counsel with members, comfort the afflicted, perform weddings and funerals and deliver a good sermon on Sunday morning. (These are important, but not primary to the pastoral office.) The Bible views the pastor as an equipper first. (See Ephesians 4:11-12)

If he gets too aggressive in his efforts to reach outsiders, he will be criticized for neglecting his duty to the membership. At some point, if he continues his aggressive evangelism efforts, he will likely be asked to move on. However, he can have a long tenure as pastor if he does not try to change things or lead the congregation in a new, innovative direction. Leadership in the Inward Focused Church is vested in the membership and not the Head which is Christ and

his under-shepherd the pastor.

HOW DO THEY VIEW THE CHURCH

Buildings are “sacred cows” for the Inward Focused Church. Members often refer to the building as God’s house when in fact the temple of God today is the human heart. Jesus said to the woman at the well, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father...But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth...” (John 4:21&23 NKJV)

The Inward Focused Church will pour hours of sweat and effort and spend millions of dollars to maintain their facilities while sending a token amount to missions and evangelism. They have the “Field of Dreams” syndrome – build it and they will come! They measure their success by the size of facility they are able to build.

GROWTH EXPERIENCED

Numerical growth in the Inward Focused Church rarely outpaces the rate of attrition due to death or transfer. The long term implications of this phenomenon are empty church buildings. In spite of the fact that the members love their little family church, it will one day die if something miraculous does not happen.

When old attitudes are abandoned and people catch a vision for building relations with lost people in order to win them to Christ, build them in faith, and send them back into the world to influence others, new life will be infused into a dead congregation and lost people will be reached. FriendFluence is not an aggressive campaign to recapture the hearts of the disgruntled or complacent inactive members; it is reaching out to those who have no gospel influence at all

in their lives. This may include inactive members, but not exclusively. Growth can come to this type of church if the members will embrace and implement FriendFluence.

THE FRIENDLY CHURCH

Every now and then, there is a church that stands out from others when it comes to friendliness. This church may have procedures in place for making people feel welcome in the services such as a welcome team or a friendly “get-up-and-shake-a-hand-or-hug-a-neck-time.” They may even have an organized visitation program that makes some attempt to go out once a week and knock on doors in the community. They have a reputation for being a welcoming church. And they are seeing some numerical growth. On the surface, the Friendly Church seems to have it all together. The question we must ask is, “Are they really reaching the lost or merely attracting already church-ed people?” Let’s look a little closer at the Friendly Church.

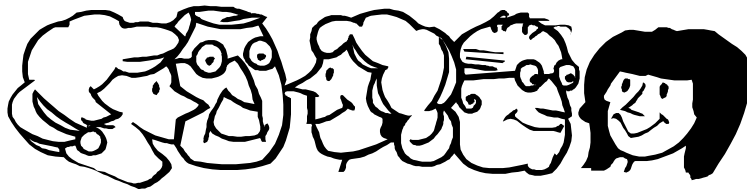
THE MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS

The Friendly Church has broken out of the mold of the family church. While there may be some family relationships and same last names in this type of church, there are other people who have come to the church from non-family relationships. They may be people who have moved their membership from another area church or even people who were reached by the church through an organized visitation program. These people have established a homogeneous network of friends within the church and they tend to associate with these friends only. Over time, they may break away from having close friendships with people outside of the church – the lost – in favor of their network of church friends. The church relationships are just easier and more comfortable.

This shift in relationships takes them away from situations where they have an opportunity to build relationships with lost people. They join the church softball team instead of the community softball team. They go to church holiday celebrations instead of community activities. Instead of going out to dinner with co-workers, they go to the pot-luck supper at church. In other words, they insulate themselves from the world.

THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD OUTSIDERS

The attitude toward outsiders in the Friendly Church is often accepting yet guarded. It takes some time for the outsider to work his or her way into the right clique or network of friends before being fully accepted. This may seem contrary to the first impression that one would



receive when attending a service or organized program at the Friendly Church due to the intentional

welcoming processes and programs. However, these processes are usually only designed to make the specific event feel friendly rather than make the church FriendFluential.

Penny and I recently joined a new church. I had preached a revival in this church the previous year and was impressed with their programs and commitment to missions. When I returned to this church for a worship service, it seemed to be very welcoming. (My wife was out of town at the time.) The church had ushers stationed outside of the sanctuary to welcome people as they arrived. During the greeting time, a number of people spoke to me and welcomed me to the church. Some were asking me if we were going to join. I had not experienced this type of welcome in our previous church. And my wife was on staff!

After joining, we found that we were the ones who had to reach out to the people and

build relationships with them. We were the ones who called to make dinner appointments. No one approached us about joining a Sunday school class even though the pastor encouraged the Sunday school teachers to contact us when we joined publicly. It took effort to be accepted. Beyond the original flash of friendliness and welcome, we had to initiate any relationships within the church.

THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LOST

When it comes to the lost, the Friendly Church is concerned with sharing the good news. They understand the implications of not reaching out to the unchurched, but this understanding does not motivate a majority of the membership to actively pursue relationships with the lost (although there may be some individuals in the church that have a passion of evangelism).

Friendly Churches view the task of evangelism as a program driven activity rather than personal relationship driven. In other words, they expect evangelism to happen through their organized ministries such as Sunday school, worship, outreach, children's programs or youth activities. They are more than willing to invest in resources to make this happen – especially bigger buildings and staff positions. However, evangelism is someone else's duty in the Friendly Church (i.e. the pastor and staff).

WHO INITIATES RELATIONSHIPS

As mentioned earlier, the outsider is expected to initiate the deepening of relationships in the Friendly Church. If the outsider is good at building relationships with people, they will soon fit in with a crowd of similar friends. If the outsider is introverted, they will soon get discouraged and drop out of church altogether or move their membership. Sometimes this

situation creates a “church hopping” scenario where members bounce back and forth between congregations.

HOW DO THEY VIEW THE PASTOR

The pastor of the Friendly Church is expected to do evangelism. He is seen as the primary soul winner. Members will invite people to hear the pastor preach on Sunday morning or they will call the pastor and ask if he will visit their lost friend. But, rarely will they see their own responsibility to share the good news. Neither will they respond in a lasting way to the pastors appeals from the pulpit to witness to the lost. As long as the Friendly Church pastor is effective in reaching people with the good news, he will have a secure tenure.

HOW DO THEY VIEW THE CHURCH

The Friendly Church sees beyond buildings to the fact that the Church is the people. Sometimes however, they believe that only their people are the Church. In other words, they speak in terms of denominational distinctions or they sometimes make nonessential doctrine the standard for judging who is “in” and who is “out.” Sometimes they limit their outreach to those who look like them (i.e.: same socioeconomic level, skin color, or interests).

GROWTH EXPERIENCED

A close examination of the membership records of the Friendly Church will reveal the true effectiveness of a Friendly Church. A majority of the growth seen in these churches comes from the moving of memberships from other churches. There will be a few baptisms from among the unchurched – more so than in the Inward Focused Church – but never to the level needed to make a significant Kingdom impact.

THE FRIENDFLUENTIAL CHURCH

There is no such thing as a perfect church. And, it is difficult to imagine a church where the prevailing attitude and activity are FriendFluential. FriendFluence starts with a spark – a vision caught by a few key leaders. That spark is fanned into a flame only by putting the principles of FriendFluence into action. Pretty soon, many people have caught the vision to build relationships with the lost in order to win them to Christ. That is my hope and reason for writing this curriculum: to see people fulfill the great commission in their everyday lives just as Jesus intended.

THE MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS

In the FriendFluential church, much time and effort is put into seeking out the lost. This takes place outside of the four walls of the church. We can no longer expect people to come to our beautiful buildings or proper programs. Most people have experienced those types of things and found them lacking. For that reason, we are compelled to go to them.

This attitude is prevalent in the FriendFluential church. A great portion of the membership looks for the opportunities around them that God has given to build Kingdom relationships. They know that if their friends are going to be reached, it is going to depend on their influence. So they willingly put themselves in places and positions where they can meet and know the unchurched.

THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD OUTSIDERS

The FriendFluential Church is very open to new people. Not only are the services and activities made to feel friendly, intentional follow up procedures are in place. Some churches

have visitation teams that are in the home of guests on the afternoon after their Sunday visit. They find ways to touch people as many times as possible in order to build a relationship with their prospects. Outsiders will have no problems getting to know the people in the FriendFluential church.

THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LOST

The primary function of a FriendFluential church is to make as many followers of Jesus Christ as possible. Each member has a specific goal in mind when it comes to building Kingdom Relationships. They realize that the lost may not act or look like they do. The FriendFluential church tries to identify and target affinity groups that meet the needs of those in their circle of influence. They build their programs accordingly.

WHO INITIATES RELATIONSHIPS

The Inward Focused Church and the FriendFluential church have something in common. The members are the ones who initiate relationships with outsiders and lost people. In the FriendFluential church however, the people seek to have relationships with the lost. It is not a matter of being “allowed” to join the family as it is with the Inward Focused Church.

The FriendFluential church member goes to great lengths to seek the lost. They join civic clubs and social organizations to meet lost people. They take active roles in their children’s school life and the events and organizations of the school. They take time to talk to the people that God sends their way. All of these things are for the purpose of initiating relationships. A FriendFluential Christian follows his Lord in seeking the lost in order to save the lost.

HOW DO THEY VIEW THE PASTOR

A FriendFluent church pastor is allowed to fulfill his primary calling as an equipper of the saints. Every member literally becomes a minister. This does not mean that he does not fulfill other roles like evangelist or pastoral leader. On the contrary, these duties will increase. But He will be allowed to delegate these responsibilities to the membership and they will gladly accept them.

HOW DO THEY VIEW THE CHURCH

The FriendFluent church has a much larger view of the church. They see beyond the trappings of the local body and their denomination or non essential doctrine. They understand that the church is made up of all those who are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. This gives them a cooperative outlook that doesn't compromise the truth of the good news.

GROWTH EXPERIENCED

In the FriendFluent church, the majority of growth comes through conversions instead of transfers. This church is truly impacting and adding to the Kingdom of God. While it does not turn away transfers from other churches, it doesn't make them a top priority in its outreach plans.

This is the type of numerical growth that Jesus had in mind when he started the church. The Bible is clear in expressing God's desire to reach all men with the good news of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 3:9 says that "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (NKJV)

SESSION 3 – BECOMING FRIENDFLUENTIAL

“The greatest soil for Evangelism is friendship.”- John MacArthur

God is on mission to redeem a lost world. He has invited believers to join him in that mission. Many times we hear this mandate from God, but we say, “That is not for me.” Unfortunately, there is no “someone else” in God’s plan of redemption. You and I are it! So we might as well roll up our sleeves and get busy for Jesus. The fact that you are attending this conference already says that you have an interest in reaching the lost with the good news. But you must turn your interest into action.

The most important relationships in a FriendFluential Church are Kingdom relationships. Kingdom relationships are relationships initiated with others for the purpose of influencing them for Christ. **In a FriendFluential Church, the members don’t wait for the lost to come to them; they go to the lost first.** Or, as someone has said, the Church must go into the world because the world won’t come into the church.

This means that the activities of the FriendFluential church are designed with reaching the lost in mind (as opposed to pleasing the saved). FriendFluence can be easily integrated into the existing church programs. Some examples of this are as follows:

- Turn the annual Vacation Bible School into a backyard Bible club format. Hold your Backyard Bible Club in several unreached neighborhoods where there is little or no gospel influence.
- Start evangelistic small group meetings in the homes of members. This will give

a comfortable setting for members to invite their lost friends to hear the good news. Make sure the literature being used is designed to introduce people to the claims of Christ and the gospel (as opposed to discipleship materials).

- Hold annual Christmas and Easter pageants in locations other than the church sanctuary. Try a local community college or a community theater. Encourage church members to invite their lost friends. Have a gospel presentation at the end of the program.
- Host a harvest festival as a safe Christian alternative to Halloween. Give out tickets to children in your church to use to invite their friends to the party. Use the tickets as an entry for a door prize. Children must be present to win the prize and make sure it is something nice. Before the drawing, have a brief gospel presentation and invite children and their parents to receive Christ.
- Begin a servanthood evangelism program where people use acts of kindness to touch the community. Try holding a free car wash at a local auto parts store or giving cups of cold water away at a local summer festival. There are hundreds of ideas available online at www.servanthoodevangelism.com.
- Think outside the church!



*The Church
has left the
building!*

This also means that members must begin to look for the ways that God has given them

to build relationships with others. Here are some examples:

- Use your hobby as a **BRIDGE** building tool. For example, join a local hunting or fishing club and get to know some of the people who participate in these seasonal activities. Many fishermen are in their boats on Sunday morning instead of in church. They may never hear the good news unless you go where they are.
- Ladies can get involved in activities that interest them. Is there a scrap booking club in town? Go join them. Are there groups in the community that are designed for mothers with preschoolers? Get involved with one of them or start one yourself. Not only can these groups provide personal enrichment, but they are fertile ground for kingdom relationships.
- Get to know your neighbors. Invite them over for a backyard barbeque. Have a neighborhood spaghetti party. Provide the pasta and ask your neighbors to bring their favorite sauce. Provide copies of the Jesus Film on DVD for each person attending. Hospitality is evangelism's greatest tool.
- Visit sick co-workers in the hospital or in their home. If they have needs around their home that you can fulfill, ask permission to help (i.e.: mow the grass, chop fire wood, look after family pets, cook a meal, etc.).

Becoming FriendFluential requires the adoption of a whole new set of attitudes about your place in evangelism. It will require you to step out of your comfort zone. It takes effort and an investment of time and energy. It may require a change of schedule and activities for some people. Others will have no problem integrating FriendFluence into their schedule.

In order to be FriendFluential you must be a **FRIEND** to the lost. Here is an acronym to help you build Kingdom relationships. To be a **FRIEND** you must:

Find ways to build **BRIDGES** to lost people

Reach out to those people with whom you can build long-term relationships

Involve yourself in their lives through prayer and participation

Extend an invitation for them to be involved in Christian activities

Never pass up an opportunity to share the gospel

Disciple them through a hands-on mentoring relationship

The **BRIDGES** we must build to the lost will require some strong materials. These include:

Boldness to reach across barriers

Responsiveness to the needs of those we seek to win

Integrity in our own walk with Christ

Determination never to give up on reaching our friends

Grace to understand how and why they live the way they live

Empathy to identify with their spiritual situation

Sincerity to show we have their best interests at heart.

ACTIVITY

In groups of three or four people, take a few minutes to discuss some ideas about how to be a **FRIEND** and build **BRIDGES** to those around you who are lost. Record your answers on the next page and be ready to report back to the entire group at the end of the time.

OUR FRIENDFLUENCE IDEAS

NOTE TAKING SPACE FOR BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Session for men: Building **BRIDGES** to men. – Darrel Davis

Session for women: Building **BRIDGES** to women. – Penny Davis

SESSION 4 – WIN, BUILD, SEND

FriendFluential relationships have a purpose. The ultimate end of a FriendFluential relationship is to win your friend to Jesus Christ, build them up in the faith and to send them back into the world to influence others toward the Kingdom. This goal is motivated by love and eternal concern for our family, friends, co-workers and acquaintances. The Bible tells us that the love of Christ compels us to spread the good news of Jesus Christ (See 2 Corinthians 5:14)

One of the dangers of FriendFluence is the tendency to focus on building the relationship without sharing the gospel. If we simply get to know people and serve their needs we have done them no good. If we introduce them to the church, we have done them no good. We must introduce them to Jesus if we are going to make a difference. If we truly love those around us and are deeply concerned for their welfare, we will do more than just build friendships with them, we will influence them for Christ.

In Mark 2, we see how four friends made an extraordinary effort to get their friend to Christ: We read beginning in verse 3:

“Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you.’”

(Mark 2:3-5 NKJV)

These four friends knew that Jesus could meet the needs of their friend. They began with a burden for him. This burden came from their understanding of his condition. He was paralyzed.

Spiritually, those who are lost are paralyzed. Without a friend to help them come to Christ, they may end up being forever separated from Him in a place called Hell.

Next, these friends were willing to break down the barriers that stood in the way of them getting their friend to Jesus. Their barriers were physical and literal – the crowd and the roof. The barriers we face may be those in our own heart. Fear of rejection, fear of failure and fear of offending our friends are just a few of those barriers. Other barriers include time and convenience, distance and differences.

Finally, these friends believed God for big answers. When Jesus saw their faith, he healed their friend physically and spiritually. If we build relationships with our lost friends and believe that God will use us to win them to Christ, God will honor that faith.

COMMUNICATING THE GOOD NEWS

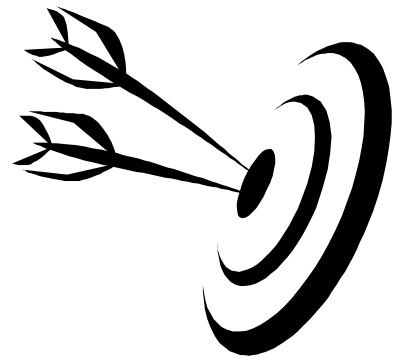
Every FriendFluential Christian should know how to communicate the basics of the gospel. There are many great training programs out there that I would encourage you to take advantage of. One of my favorite witnessing courses is Share Jesus Without Fear by William Fay. It is an easy to learn method that does not require scripture memorization or a silver tongue! Basically, it allows God's Word to speak for itself. I highly recommend it! Another very good witnessing tool is the Evangecube. It uses pictures to communicate the gospel and is fairly inexpensive. These are available at www.evangecube.org or in some Christian bookstores.

However, I think it is far more important to understand and know some basic concepts of what to communicate than it is to know a specific method. The reason for this lies in my

experience. Any time I have witnessed to someone, I have never stuck with one method to the letter. I have always relied upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit as He brings words and scriptures to mind depending upon the background and response of the lost person. After all, the Holy Spirit is our best friend when it comes to witnessing. Let us look at the basic concepts that must be communicated in order for someone to understand and accept the good news.

Concept 1: SIN IS THE PROBLEM (Romans 3:10, 23)

Sin is what keeps man from connecting with God. The Bible says that all are sinners by nature, and that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Imagine an arrow being shot from a bow heading toward its target. Something interferes with the flight of that arrow and it completely misses the target.



That is a picture of sin. Sinners have missed God's target for their lives – to live according to His standards. We must convince our friends of their own sin and need for a Savior.

Concept 2: SIN HAS A PENALTY (Romans 6:23)

Sin is more than mere imperfection that needs to be corrected with self-help advice; it is a violation of the nature and character of God. It is the breaking of His law which carries a penalty. The penalty that sinners deserve is forever separation from God in a place called Hell. Hell is described as a place of outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is a place where the flame is never quenched and the worm does not die. Our friends will experience this penalty if they reject Jesus Christ.

Concept 3: GOD HAS MADE A PROVISION FOR SIN (Romans 6:23 & 5:8)

God's heart is to know us forever and that we never have to experience this penalty prescribed for sin. So He paid the penalty for our sin by sending His only Son to take our punishment on the cross. Not only did He take our punishment, but He came back to life on the third day. When our friends put their faith and trust in the person and atoning work of Christ, they will be forgiven and they will receive the gift of eternal life.

Concept 4 – OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S PROVISION (Romans 10:9-10, 13)

Faith is the key that unlocks the door of salvation. Even the faith we have is a gift from God. To have faith in Christ is to place all of our trust in what He did on the cross to pay for our sins. We must respond in faith to the offer of forgiveness and eternal life that God has provided in Christ. We give up our life in exchange for the perfect life that Christ lived for us. In turn, Jesus comes into our life through the Holy Spirit and enables us to live for Him.

BUILDING THE FAITH THROUGH DISCIPLESHIP

It is not enough for us to win our friend to Christ, we must help them grow in their faith. This is normally accomplished through the discipleship channels offered in your local church. The problem is that most people making a decision for Christ are left to their own after making a decision. It is assumed that they are going to join a Sunday School class or Bible Study. It is assumed that they know how to pray or read the Bible. But that is not always the case.

What if you had a newborn baby added to your family and the joy of the birth and happiness of a new life overshadowed the responsibility to care for the child. The mother forgets to nurse the child or change its diapers or bathe it. That kind of neglect will lead to the death of the child. How can we expect any different from newborn babes in Christ if they are not nurtured in faith?

The FriendFluential Christian takes on the role of mentor after the salvation of the friend. They provide accountability, prayer, teaching and encouragement to their friend. They make sure that the friend is enrolled in the discipleship channels of the local church. They devote at least a year to each new Christian friend to make sure they are growing in faith and walking with Christ. This is time well invested. In that process, they train their friends to do the very same thing that they have done – influence others for Christ. This results in Kingdom multiplication as opposed to mere addition.

CONCLUSION

Any church can experience greater impact for the Kingdom if they will embrace and implement FriendFluence. It requires vision and a burden for the world around us. When members catch a vision to win their friends to Christ, build them in faith, and send them back into the world to influence others, God will bless in ways that are beyond imagining. The consequences of not implementing FriendFluence – or another friendship evangelism strategy – will haunt us all for eternity. I would close with the words of a few famous voices from history that remind us of our need to be FriendFluential.

“Would that God would make hell so real to us that we cannot rest; heaven so real that we must have men there.” – J. Hudson Taylor

““Not called!” did you say? “Not heard the call” I think you should say. Put your ear down to the Bible, and hear Him bid you go and pull sinners out of the fire of sin. Put your ear down to the burdened, agonized heart of humanity, and listen to its pitiful wail for help. Go stand by the gates of hell, and hear the damned entreat you to go to their father’s house and bid their brothers and sister not to come there. Then look Christ in the face whose mercy you have professed to obey – and tell him whether you will join heart and soul and body and circumstances in the march to publish His mercy to the world.” – William Booth

“I care not where I go or how I live or what I endure so that I may save souls. When I sleep, I dream of them; when I awake, they are first in my thoughts.” – David Brainerd.