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A Word from Woody...

An Important Distinction in Evangelism

There he sat, weeping. He was only a teenager, but the Holy Spirit seemed to have touched him in a profound way through the worship service. My heart went out to him, and I tried to encourage him after the service in his apparent newborn faith. An eager pastor would be quick to consider this a successful conversion; a cautious pastor would proceed with tempered, skeptical follow-up. Which pastor would be right?

We don't have to be in Christ's ministry for long to come across such a situation. Someone has made a decision for following Christ and His way of living, only to become swayed years later to a different path. How do we make sense of this in a way that does not break our hearts—and especially in a way that prevents us from becoming cynical?

I believe Beau Crosetto can help us here. You may remember he was our speaker at our Church Family Night last November. He is trying to start campus ministries at such places as UNO, Tulane University, and LSU with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. In his recent book *Beyond Awkward: When Talking About Jesus Is Outside Your Comfort Zone* (available at Amazon.com), Beau makes a helpful distinction which I believe we must keep in mind with evangelism. Sharing the gospel today is more process than event. I.e., a person in our culture, which is often post-Christian, is led to Jesus more through a relationship with a believer who lives out the Christian faith than through a one-time event like an evangelism rally. Thus, one can expect a gradual process where a person is drawn closer to Jesus step-by-step before actually making a decision for Christ as Lord and Savior. When someone has an emotional encounter with Jesus, as with the teenager mentioned above, Beau has a helpful question to follow up with him to make an important distinction in evangelism. **Beau explains, "From that point on I made sure that we met with every person who made a decision for Christ to ask them, 'Do you think you had an awakening moment last night or a believing moment?'"** (p. 65).

Beau describes an awakening moment in this way.

"You sensed something of God in the service—a powerful testimony, moving music and verses—or you resonated with something the speaker said. You stood up because you are awakening to God's presence, but you are not ready yet to follow Jesus and let him call the shots in your life. You want to seek him out and learn more first" (p. 65). On the other hand, he says a believing moment is different. "You have come to a point in your journey where you realize following Jesus is more than experiences. It is about letting him transform you and call the shots in your life. You realize that he has died for your sin, buried it in the grave and risen to give you new life and purpose in this world. You are saying yes to him driving your life and being in control" (p. 65).

This distinction in evangelism helps us not to become devastated or lose hope for the person who has shied away from an initial decision to follow Jesus. This person may have just had a profound experience with God which may have drawn him or her closer to a final decision to follow Jesus. God is not finished reaching out to the person, and nor should we. If, on the other hand, the person has indeed had a believing moment, then we are wise to take initiative to see him or her grow in the faith.

Therefore, I would conclude that both the eager pastor and the cautious pastor are correct. We need to have joy and optimism when someone makes a profession of faith in Christ, and yet realize this may be in reality a step closer to Christ, but not yet there. Unfortunately, the teenager mentioned above is now an adult who no longer attends church. It would be **wise for me to follow up on him with Beau's helpful question.**

Please keep in mind that Beau will be leading our retreat in Covington on February 8-9 on evangelism. Please see the article in this newsletter for more information—**this is an opportunity we won't want to miss!**

Yours in Christ,

Woody



Youth Corner

Gleaning Satsumas?

Many thanks to Gray and Yolande Goudeau for hosting us for our Christmas breakfast last month. We had delicious pancakes, and a fun time playing our "white elephant" game!

This month we are looking into helping Second Harvest Food Bank with gleaning satsumas from 10:00 AM-12:00 Noon in Larose, LA! More information will be forthcoming.



Church Family Night

Church Family Night will meet on Wednesday, January 9th with Popeye's red beans and rice for supper from 6:00-7:00 PM. Rev. Walter Hackney, formerly an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and currently ordained in the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO), will share about his experience in that denomination and why he left. Please make plans to come, and bring friends!

Have a Strong-willed Child?

Have a Strong-willed Child? If you have a strong-willed child, help is here! Pastor Woody is leading this class based on psychologist Dr. James Dobson's book and workbook *The New Strong-willed Child* this month on Tuesdays January 15th and 29th from 6:30-7:30 PM. This is a nine-session class, and this month will mark its final two meetings. Free childcare will be provided. The two books can be purchased through the church for \$22, or you can purchase them yourselves at Amazon.com. Please help get the word out on this important class, and feel free to attend any of the classes.

Church Council and Finance Committee Meetings

The Church Council and Finance Committee will meet twice this month. The first meeting will be both groups, from 2018 and 2019 combined, and will take place in the chapel after the worship service on Sunday, January 6th as we assess where we are financially for the year ending 2018.

The second meeting will be on Monday, January 28th, with the Finance Committee meeting at 6:45 PM and the Church Council at 8:00 PM as we set the 2019 budget.



Christmas 15

Stewardship and Planning for 2019

The Finance Committee is preparing to meet to **plan next year's budget.**

If you have not yet turned in a pledge card for 2019, you are urged to do so as soon as possible. Cards are available at both entrances to the sanctuary, or you can call the church office at 504 288-2242 to have one mailed to you (or to check whether you have submitted yours).

To date, we have \$92,160 in pledges for 2019. While any of these commitments may be revised or **cancelled at any time at the pledger's request**, your pledges help the committee to project how best to use the funds God will make available to them through the **congregation's planned giving.**

Sermons for January

Pastor Hingle will finish the Advent Sermon Series, **"What difference Does Christmas Make?"** on Sunday, January 6th. He will thereafter return to the sermon series on the Gospel of John called **"Good News for Life"**, picking up in the gospel at chapter 2.

A Time for Fellowship for Guys!

We have a new adult Sunday School class which is geared for men! Pastor Woody Hingle is leading this group that meets in the Library at 9:30 AM, and we are currently studying the Gospel of Matthew. Also, the men will enjoy their monthly supper together on Tuesday, January 22nd from 6:30-8:00 PM at New Orleans Hamburger and Seafood, 817 Veterans Memorial Blvd. in Metairie—and please bring your Bibles. All men are invited and encouraged to bring friends!

a Giving Time



Prayer Focus

- ✚ Barbara Velasquez, health
- ✚ The UMC, unity and faithfulness to the Bible and its doctrines
- ✚ Beryl Lynn Jones, recovery from surgery
- ✚ Susan Doyle, recovery from surgery
- ✚ Cheryl Strauss, in the death of Jim
- ✚ Herbert and Brenda Marks, in the death of his son Robert
- ✚ Laura Smith mourning the loss of her father, and health concerns for her mother
- ✚ **For Lake Vista UMC's ministry as we end 2018 and begin 2019**

Church New Year Retreat!

Our New Year Retreat will be held this year on the weekend of February 8th-9th at Country Inn & Suites in Covington, LA. The cost will be \$115 per person for a single room, and \$135 for a double room. The cost includes all fees for room, speaker, and two meals (supper and breakfast).

The retreat will kick off on Friday, February 8th at 6:00 PM with a catered supper at the hotel and end at 12:00 Noon on Saturday.

Our speaker will be the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship campus minister Beau Crosetto, who serves such campuses as UNO, Tulane, and LSU. His topic will be on how to share the Christian faith in an effective **way in today's culture, based on his book *Beyond Awkward: When Talking About Jesus Is Outside Your Comfort Zone.***

You are encouraged to purchase this book (available at Amazon.com) and read it before the retreat. Scholarships are available. To register, please contact the Church Office, and/or see Pastor Woody or Susan Doyle.



Read your newsletter online at <http://www.LakeVistaUMC.org>

Mission Opportunity

We will serve on Saturday, January 12th from 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon in Larose, LA with Second Harvest Food Bank gleaning satsumas. Please feel free to join with the youth group as we try to help those in need! More information will be forthcoming.

Thank You from the Hingles:

Dear Lake Vista UMC Brothers and Sisters: Thank you for your Christmas financial gift which we received last month. Your generosity and kindness overwhelm us, and we truly appreciate this gift! We are thankful indeed to be part of such a thoughtful church family!
Yours in Christ's Love, The Hingles

Skeptic's Class

This event will return on Friday, January 18th at 12:00 Noon in the Parlor at church. We will continue our discussion of Paul Copan's *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*, chapters 14-15.

Prayer Walk Around the Neighborhood

Prayer Walk: Saturday, January 19th from 10:30-11:30 AM. Please join us for this wonderful ministry!

A lighthouse for Christ in the heart of the lakefront.

Lake Vista

United Methodist Church

6645 Spanish Fort Blvd.
New Orleans, LA 70124

Small Group Offerings

Wednesday SONrise and Wonderful Wednesday Bible—The SONrise service will meet from 6:30-7:30 AM each Wednesday this month except for January 2nd, and the Bible study will just meet on the 16th, 23rd, and 30th which is led by Pastor Woody and will go over the previous Sunday's sermon. **The Bible study meets in the Fellowship Hall from 7:00-8:00 PM.** All are welcome!



The S(tudy), P(ray), A(ct) Ladies' The SPA Ladies will resume the "All Things New" Bible study on Tuesday at 9am at Cheryl's house. We will discuss the homework that goes with Session 6. The study alter-

nates between Debby Grimm's and Cheryl Richard's houses on Tuesdays from 9:00 to 10:00 AM. All are welcome to participate.

Sunday School classes for all ages begin at 9:30 AM on Sunday mornings. Adult classes meet in the Parlor and library. Youth and children meet in the Education Building.