

advice. Invest some compassion for their situation. You may be the closest thing they have to a Christlike influence. So get started by investing in your friend.

Your friend may be ripe for an invitation. Sometimes people are just waiting for someone to invite them. You may be the one to extend it. The invite can be a big one—like coming to a church service with you. Or it can be a small invite—like joining you for a fun event at the church or with your small group. Just do it! Get started by simply inviting your friend.

Your friend may look busy all the time. People run from meeting to meeting at work. They may only go outside to wash their cars. They may be chasing after kids constantly. But many times people are just trying to look busy. Sometimes you have to actually interrupt in order to build a relationship. It may just be a two-minute interruption so you can offer to help them with their work, or washing their car, or with the kids. Get started by interrupting them if you have to.

Your friend may have a lot to offer. Sometimes people don't get interested in church or spiritual things because they don't know what it has to offer them. Well, turn the tables on them. Instead of starting with all you've got to give them, start with all they've got to give to the church. Not money—but what they're good at. Involve them in a ministry. Hundreds of ways exist to serve in church. Nearly anyone can help. But do that ministry together—so you can get to know your friend better while doing it. Get started by involving your friend in serving.

There are so many ways to get started with your friend. Choose one of these ways or come up with your own, something tailor-made for building a truly redemptive, authentic relationship. But whatever you choose to do, get started right away.

the fruit of the disciplines

fruit of the disciplines = what you do

New Year's Resolutions = from the crowd

Turn to a neighbor and on a scale of 1-10... answer this question: "how disciplined am I?"

1 corinthians 9:24-27... READ IT
who/what are you training for?

The Super Bowl (football) - how much athletes work for their championship rings

the prize
(1 Thess 2:19; Phil 4:1)

?? Crowns in heaven - Diadema vs. Stephanos=to wreath
?? "The Biggest Loser" TV show — doing it all for the "after" picture

the one we give it to
(Rev 4:9-11)

?? Crowns in heaven (Burger King Crown—have them to make a few in audience wear them)
?? They lay down their crowns in this passage!

some fruitful disciplines:

prayer—pray powerful prayers for the lost!

James 5:16 says, “The prayer of a righteous [person] is powerful and effective.” Do you really think this is true? If you don’t, then you have other issues to deal with. If you do, then two things will happen:

First, you’ll take your own discipleship more seriously—knowing that more hinges on it than your own growth. The health and even the salvation of others may depend on it. When you remember that your prayers have their effectiveness and power rooted in your own connection to the vine, you’ll take your own connectedness more seriously.

Second, you’ll take your own prayers more seriously—knowing that God pays attention to what you’re saying. You’ll pray his will more often and pray those things you know to be in his will more carefully.

fasting—live for God in an extreme way!

In our church we have the practice of calling the whole church to periodic days of prayer and fasting. We’ll set aside a particular date for everyone in the church who is able to pray and fast for a specific purpose. We’ve found that those issues that we designate a specific day for like this are always resolved. When we’ve had open staff positions and a struggle in finding God’s choice to fill it, God has provided soon after a time of fasting and prayer. When we’ve had financial shortfall and prayed and fasted about it, God has provided soon after.

While entering into our first capital stewardship campaign for a massive relocation effort, we set aside certain days for prayer and fasting related to that issue. Those days would often come and go with many fasting, but also with many forgetting.

One morning, when the new school year was beginning, a family in our church was getting ready. The mother wanted to start things off right that year and was planning to have a nice big breakfast as a family every morning. Her middle-school daughter said she wasn’t going to have breakfast that day. The mother went into a long speech about breakfast being the most important meal of the day. You need to eat breakfast, honey. The daughter quietly responded, “Not today, Mom. Then the

neighborhood with whom you want to build an authentic redemptive relationship.

Your friend may think church is the dullest place on earth. Change that perception by doing something together that interests them. Get involved in something they’re already doing or talking of doing. But do it together and do it just for fun. You need more fun in your life anyway. By starting with something that truly interests them, it’s hard for them not to want to spend time with you. And time is crucial with building relationships. Get started with something that interests your friend.

Your friend may not need you to beat around the bush. I bet you hate it when you get that telemarketing call where the caller won’t get to the point. The marketer asks random questions that don’t have anything to do with the bottom line. Same thing here. Sometimes you need to cut to the chase with your friend and inspire them with how excited you are. Don’t soft sell it—just cut loose on how important your spiritual life is for you. It will inspire them to have that same kind of excitement in their lives. With some friends you can just jump right in and get them excited about spiritual relationships. So get started by inspiring your friend.

Your friend may not want to take it all “hook, line and sinker” without checking things out for a while. So give them that opportunity. Include them in church! More than inviting them to services, including them is about community. In fact, you may want your friend to come to your small group or a fun outing with other Christians long before you invite him or her to a service. Get started by including your friend in your church life.

Your friend may have a lot of issues. Don’t we all? You may not see yourself as having many answers—but if your friend knows you at all they may see something in you they want to learn from. They’re not looking to upset the apple cart of their lives too much yet. But their cart has enough rotten apples that they are ready to learn from you. It might be time to try investing in your friend. Invest extended time. Invest authentic

So how did he know they were competent to do anything? They could have been a bunch of chuckleheads for all he knew.

In fact, many of the Roman converts were likely former slaves and very poor. Many were likely women, who in that culture had much less education and leadership skills than women in our world. Why would Paul say they were competent? He must have known something most people didn't.

THE ONLY QUALIFICATION THAT MATTERS...

Something resides inside all Christians that makes them competent to instruct other disciples: the Holy Spirit. This competence is the fifth spiritual discipline. The only qualification that matters is whether you know Christ. If you know Christ, he's given you his Spirit. His Spirit works through you to make you competent to instruct other people.

The Spirit speaks through broken vessels. He speaks through you from time to time, and are you perfect? Well then, it's no big leap to presume that other imperfect disciples around you may be spoken through from time to time, too, even with their rough edges thrown in. Think of instructing as coaching. Everyone needs a little coaching from time to time. And Paul thinks you're competent to do it, because we, like the Romans, have the Holy Spirit in our lives.

When you don't give coaching to other believers, you withhold what the Spirit may want to say through you. And when you don't receive the coaching of other believers, you are inferring that they don't have the Spirit either. Or that you're not interested in what the Holy Spirit wants to teach you through them. Not a great position for a Christian to be in, to say the least.

relationships—strive to really do life with the lost

Every Christian is unique, right? The church is full of different people! Why wouldn't this also be true about people that aren't Christians? They're different, too! So don't think that the same simple plan is going to work in reaching all these different people for Jesus. Look at people as individuals. There are several ways to get started with that person at work or in your

mother stressed even harder that she was making a nice big breakfast. Only after repeated challenge did the daughter finally say, "Mom, don't you know it's the day of prayer and fasting?"

We're humbled to think of the power of that kind of obedience in a church. When even our middle-school students are living with exemplary faith and with extreme spiritual disciplines, we know our church is on the right track! Think of the power of a fasting church.

confession—be real and authentic to the lost!

Donald Miller, author of the book *Blue Like Jazz*, relates a story from a different perspective when it comes to confession. He and a very small group of Christian friends went to a permissive school in the Pacific Northwest that encouraged extreme lifestyles. The school would have a huge and bizarre party each year where every kind of excess was permitted and celebrated. Students even walked naked around the campus for days. Obviously this was a difficult environment to know how to do evangelism. The fellow students they talked to about their faith would respond with outbursts and hang-ups about the flaws of evangelicals and the sins of the Christian church in history or even in the present. They were getting nowhere and had nearly given up. Then the group decided to put up a "confession booth" in the middle of the common area of campus. They constructed this booth, put up a big sign saying "confession booth" and then took turns waiting for people to come in and talk with them. After a while one brave soul finally went in, wondering what was going on. The Christian on duty proceeded to tell the man that entered that they were going to confess, and he didn't have to participate if he didn't want to. So the Christian began to tell the man that he was sorry for the sins that have been committed in the name of the church throughout the years. He was sorry for the way some Christians had offended people. He was sorry for this and for that. He made a "reverse confession." This wasn't what the unbelieving man had expected—but it had a profound effect. Walls began to come down. Word spread and before long there was a line on that campus to not only hear the confessions of these Christians, but to hear the Gospel with new ears. Ears that were ready to hear because of the authenticity and humility of the Christians in that community.

meditation—meditate, memorize then mediate it!

Once you've meditated on the portions of Scripture that mean the most to you, and committed them to memory... then it's time to pass them on. Mediating the Scripture means communicating it. Mediating is "going between" two things. A "mediator" is someone who negotiates between two individuals. A "media" in the technical sense is something that filters and transmits the most important information or material.

You're a mediator for those who don't know Christ around you. They haven't memorized Scripture. They haven't meditated on it day and night. If you have then you get the opportunity to pass on some of what they are missing. So often you struggle with what to say to someone who isn't in relationship with Jesus Christ. What God would have you do is mediate what he would say to them. You can put it in your own words, for sure, but pass it on. Then you don't have to do all the thinking. Let God figure it out. The Bible says of itself, "My word...shall not return to me void" (Isaiah 55:11). When you consider the evangelistic fruit of your life, and it seems void of it, then determine to use more of the Word according to this promise. Start small with meditation... then memorizing in bits and pieces... then mediating the Scripture to those who need it most will come naturally to you.

secret service—come to serve, not to be served!

We can serve people a million and one different ways. But more often than not, servanthood has to do with our attitude as much as our actions. One of the best ways to ensure pure servanthood is to do our acts of service in secret. We should be like the secret service agents that guard the President of the United States—no one should notice us. We should blend in with the background when we serve. Often we see the suit and sun-glasses-wearing guards of the president and assume those are the only secret service agents around him. In fact, many agents under cover in plain clothes mingle in the crowds and surround the president at all times. Unfortunately, when we serve we'd rather dress up and look cool and have some kind of identification, like the cords running from the ear of the

bodyguards down into their suits. We wouldn't mind being noticed for our service.

We think that in order to produce fruit for God we need to be noticed for what we're doing. But the Bible tells us fruit happens even when no one ever finds out. Don't plant "service grenades," acts of kindness that you have orchestrated to "go off" at a certain time so that you'll get the credit. Practice the discipline of not only serving, but covering the tracks of your service. When doing some secret act of service and the thought comes to you—"I wonder if anyone sees me doing this?"—don't dwell on it and hope someone will notice. Instead, figure out a way to make sure no one notices. Then look to God and say, "It's okay if no one ever knows this, God, because I'm ultimately doing it for you."

It's a test of your trust in God to cover your servanthood tracks. And God finds a way to not only use your service to point to him, but also to honor you in the end. You will receive your reward in heaven—the true "in the end" of life.

giving & receiving coaching—give out and take admonishment!

You are competent to instruct one another.

That phrase is not mine. The Apostle Paul said this in the book of Romans (15:14). It's a significant phrase. Paul is not just saying the Romans are generally competent people. He's saying they are competent enough to "instruct" each other. When you think of the word "instructor" you often think of experts in some field, teaching what they know. When you think of parachuting instructors, you expect that they have been parachuting before. When you hear of driving instructors, you'd expect them to have their driver's licenses and know a thing or two more about driving than the average person. When you see scuba diving instructors, you expect that they have been underwater more than you have.

But this is not true of the people Paul said should "instruct." Not only were they just average people with ordinary resumes, Paul didn't even know what these people were like in the first place. You see, Paul had not even met these people. He had not yet been to the Roman church. Other people started it.