

## **“Yeah, But What Are You Really Doing?”**

By Phil Arms – May 2010

Years ago when we started this ministry we held Friday and Saturday night rallies in Houston. It all began in a very large old house in the back of a lower class subdivision well off the beaten path. Once you found this obscure area then one needed to execute a series of left and right turns that would finally put you on our dead end street. We were the last house on the left before it emptied into a bayou. You really had to want to get there to find it.

Mostly, who came looking for something they were getting nowhere else. We would pack the crowds into a huge den and then into all the rest of the rooms where they, too, could listen to the message. Outside the giant patio and an oversized backyard that emptied into a public park would then fill up and there, amidst clouds of mosquitoes and Houston humidity, these young people would sit for two and three hours to hear and sing and respond to God’s Word.

We had no air conditioning, no chairs and everyone sat on the floor or the ground outside. Church buses would come full of their youth groups and join the hippies, druggies and outcasts to worship, sing, clap, and then sit and listen as I preached about Jesus. Over the years tens of thousands of these folks came to know Christ and to begin their walk with God.

Every Sunday afternoon I invited all who felt led to join me on a witnessing blitz to area parks and malls. Amazingly, up to a hundred young people would show up to join our caravan. We would arrive at our location, gather a huge circle to pray and then spread out, armed with our Bibles and tracts to share Jesus with every living being in the area.

This also resulted in thousands coming to know Jesus, many of whom would find their way to our Friday and Saturday services.

It was not long before I began to get calls from local pastors who without fail would ask, “How in the world are you getting all these young people to give up their Friday and Saturday nights to sit on the floor for three hours without air conditioning and listen to singing and preaching?”

To a very new Christian whose jump into the ministry was sudden and without theological schooling, I did not know exactly how to answer. They wanted to know what I was using to draw these crowds. All I knew to tell them was "I'm just telling them about Jesus." I was telling them to turn to Christ, to repent of their sins and allow Him to be their boss and Lord.

Invariably these pastors would ask with a chuckle, "Yeah, but how are you really doing it?" This always puzzled me but, in fact, that's exactly why so many were coming.

## **BUSTED**

The crowds got so large that a neighborhood lady turned us into the police, telling them that a giant pot party was being held every Friday and Saturday night at the end of her street.

One Friday, as thirty or so of us sat down to pray a half hour before our service, the door burst open and a dozen police in SWAT uniforms with automatic rifles ran into the room yelling, "Police, freeze!"

All of us just sat there in our prayer circle looking up at this "Charge of the Light Brigade" wondering what on earth was going on.

The cops just stared back at us as dumfounded as we stared at them. Finally the city Chief of Police stepped forward asking who was in charge. I stood up and asked, "Have we done something wrong?"

The Chief sheepishly looked at all these young people sitting there with their Bibles open and finally mumbled, "Uh, why don't you come outside with me?"

So, I did. As I explained our situation it began to dawn upon him that they had been sent on a wild goose chase. He then kindly explained that a certain lady down the street had told them that tons of young people were doing drugs here every weekend.

He said, "You really ought to do a public relations call on her so she'll understand what's going on." But I had already dropped by this lady's house to share Christ with her and that is what had ticked her off.

Finally, as the Chief of Police and I went back into the house we were greeted by the sight of all our young prayer warriors in groups of three or four surrounding the police officers witnessing to them. The Chief only had to ask once to get his men to leave.

The next night's rally began and I saw this disgruntled neighbor who I had found out was a bitter gossip disdained by the entire street, sitting in the back of the building. I had given her, days earlier, a tract with a blank space on the back for one who wanted to receive Christ to sign their name. At the end of the service, I ran back to catch the woman as she left. I got to her as she was leaving and tapped her on the shoulder. She turned around and I saw the tears streaming down her face. She stuffed a wadded up piece of paper in my hand, said "I'm really sorry" and left quickly. I stuck what I saw was a wadded up tract she gave me into my pocket and returned to other duties. When I was finally alone that night, I found that crumpled up tract still in my pocket. I unraveled it and there at the bottom where it said "If you're now giving your life to Christ, sign here." There, scribbled in the blank, was the lady's name.

Ultimately, this dear woman became my most ardent defender and showed up every weekend with two or three friends.

### **"But how...really?"**

Pastors continued to call, inquiring about what kind of activities and programs we used to draw such crowds. While my grasp on the scriptures grew and my experience in ministry expanded, my answer to their questions never changed. I always answered, "All we're doing is preaching Jesus." We offered no pizza, cookies, punch, skits, celebrities or door prizes.

And the truth was, I was so young in the Lord I did not know anything else to talk about but Jesus. Thank God!

Today, I know considerably more about the Word of God and have a doctorate in Biblical Studies but still all we're doing is preaching Jesus who said, "If I be lifted up I will draw all men to me." John 12:32

Young people today are no different than kids were ten, twenty or thirty years ago. They are bombarded with hedonistic philosophies at every turn and by the time most of them reach their teens they have seen or tried it all. Still, they're empty, starving for something to fill their barren souls and to give them something worth living and dying for.

Their hope lies not in Christian rock concerts or the empty rantings of carnal youth ministers who bend over backwards to compromise in hopes of getting more lost youth into dead church programs.

I assure you on Biblical authority God is nauseated beyond measure with today's "you're okay, I'm okay" sermonettes coming from America's largest pulpits. Church leaders for the most part have bought the humanistic lie that pragmatism is the way to reach people, young and old.

The truth is, you're not okay and I'm not okay. We desperately need to cast ourselves at the feet of Jesus and beg forgiveness for our compromised living, carnal preaching, dead dogma and lifeless messages.

## **REVIVAL**

Many church leaders have prescribed to the notion that the answer to the church's decline is in preaching a progressive message of pragmatic relativism. But to experience a true revival of Christianity in the American Church we must rediscover the power in declaring the sufficiency of Christ.

I love that old song, "Christ is all I need. Christ is all I need...all that I need. He was crucified, for me He died, Christ is all I need."

I pray you too embrace Him and that you will support us as we continue to be guided by Paul's words who said, "I am determined to know nothing among you except Christ Jesus."

Join us today as we move forward with Him as our all-consuming focus.

*As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him. Colossians 2:6*