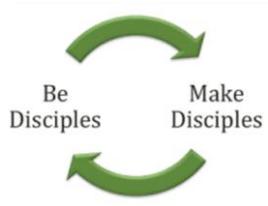
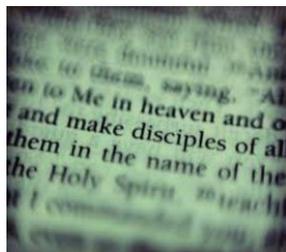


Are You A First Responder?



**LET'S GET
ENERGIZED
ABOUT
EVANGELIZM!**



Unsung heroes come in different forms. They are Christian parents struggling to raise their children in this godless culture. They are soldiers landing atop a grenade for his fellow soldiers. They are first responders using their honed skills to rescue someone in trauma, These people fulfill their duty without regard to their own well-being. Their only reward is the safety of others.



Another kind of hero is the Christian who rescues another from the eternal flames of hell (Jude 23). That someone might be the unbeliever who has never heard the good news of Jesus Christ or the Christian who allowed the voices of doubt, pain or pleasures of the world to drown out that good news.

This type of first responder is "spiritual." They live by the Holy Spirit's leading, bearing the fruit of the spirit (5:22-23). The rescuer who has produced patience and gentleness will "in a spirit of gentleness" restore that lost person (Jude 1:22). Sometimes a rescue can be painful for the patient, but the person must be brought out of a dangerous situation. Likewise, sacrificing a sinful habit (cf. Matthew 5:29-30; 16:24) might be briefly painful, but it is necessary to be rescued from the flames of hell (Jude 1:23). Therefore, true love for the sinner not mean disregarding or condoning a sin or waiting a year to find out what is happening. This tolerance is not love and it does the person no favors on the Day of Judgment.

These first responders are also "focused." Just as first responders go directly to the person in danger, a first responder who is "spiritual," focuses only on the offender. Jesus says to go to him and him alone (Matthew 18:15). Jerrie Barber has pointed out that going first to someone else about another person's sin is like opening and reading that person's mail. Would you do that? Going to others is the second step outlined by Jesus if the person has repented. If the person repents at the first approach, the matter must be dropped for good (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:5). Making the second step first leads to nothing but gossip and a ruined reputation.

These first responders are "mindful." Before first responders attempt any rescue, they must secure their own safety first. The same is true for the "spiritual." Paul says, "Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted" (v. 1). Paul is passing

along Jesus' teaching here in Matthew 7:3-5), paraphrasing, "check the beam in your own eye before attempting to pull the speck from your brother's eye (Matthew 7:3-5; Jude 1:21).

As we attempt to bring at least one person to Christ in 2017, let us have the attitude of the first responder Paul in Romans 9:1-3, "I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit-- 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

Let us be "spiritual," "focused," and "mindful" while rescuing someone from the devil's embrace.

Eric Welch, "The Worker" Bulletin of the Hamburg church of Christ, Vol. 6, Iss. 6.