Opening The Door

Assigned To:
Lay Person

Let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.

Ephesians 4:25
OBJECTIVE OF THE TALK:
To relieve the participants of false or negative impressions about the Christian life they may have acquired as a result of previous encounters with church people:

1. To replace those images with positive ones in which they see a vision of their friendship with God becoming a precious and viable reality.

2. To describe ways in which that kind of friendship is nourished and encouraged.

The vision of this friendship must be reinforced and made real through the joy and humility of the speaker as he/she demonstrates a personal response to God’s love. He/she should be a person whose every act and word draws others to Christ.

NOTE: The person chosen to give this talk should be a person who has a close personal relationship with God, a person who has been wounded and whom Jesus, our Wounded Healer, has healed, a person out of whom the Lord has made a "new creature." This speaker could be an ex-offender and must be one whose witness says, "If the Lord can allow me to establish this kind of relationship with Him, then it is available to anyone, no matter where they have been, where they are now or what they've done." Remember, most of the residents have not come from a loving community, nor are they returning to one which will welcome them with rejoicing over their new relationship with God.
Talk Outline

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PRAYER: Kairos Community Prayer, pg. 11, Freedom Guide

Speaker introduces self, telling name, whether lay or clergy person and giving name of talk. This information should also be displayed on a poster board, flip chart sheet, or be written on chalk board.

INTRODUCTION:

We heard in the Choices talk that we are and will be the product of the choices we make. This is a little frightening to many of us.

Then we heard that We Are Not Alone. There are people out there who love us and want to support us. We began to feel a little hope.

Next, we learned that God is going to pursue us no matter how difficult we may be.

The last talk told us that we can live in community with God and other Christians... if we will but open the door to God!

I. Each of us can live in Friendship with God. But, many of us don't know how to begin.

A. We do not have to earn God's friendship.

B. We don't have to be good enough.

II. We don't know how to open the door to God.

A. Some of us find it difficult to accept what we've been hearing about Jesus and about His Church, that we are worthy, that we are wanted. And, if we can accept that, we are not at all sure it
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is something we want. Why is that?

1. We may have been turned off by things done by people who are active in the church.

2. We may have experienced rejection or lack of love from church people.

3. We may feel we can't be good enough and don't even want to be good enough for a Friendship with God.

4. We may have seen Friendship with God as a set of rules to be followed rather than a relationship to be lived.

B. PERSONAL WITNESS related to deciding to draw closer to God.

III. It is a very simple act to open the door to God in our lives, but it takes courage. As we heard this morning in Chapel, we have to hang on with both hands.

A. That means we must surrender! We must let go of:

1. Ego

2. Need to control

3. Domination

B. It is a free gift - but we must accept it, unwrap it, and honor it.

IV. The practice of Friendship With God is called SPIRITUALITY. True and authentic spirituality comes from directing our lives to God, and it has the following characteristics:
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A. It is natural.

B. It is courageous. You must be willing to declare your Christianity in action, not just in words.

C. It is joyful.

V. The elements of spirituality.

A. We human beings are both flesh and spirit. It takes disciplined spiritual exercise to develop a deep spiritual life just as it takes disciplined physical exercise to develop a body. 1 Cor. 9:25.

B. Experience has taught us that there are exercises which will result in a deep spiritual life and a close Friendship with God.

1. Morning offering of ourselves to God. It can be as simple as "Here I come God, use me."

2. Daily prayer.
   a. Confession.
   b. Thanksgiving.
   c. Praise.
   d. Prayer for others. (Agape)
   e. Petition.

3. Bible Study and Reflection

4. Meditation - silence: God, I give myself to you.

5. Self-examination of actions, relationships with others and list of areas needing improvement.
6. Sharing experiences of spiritual life with others.

7. Spiritual direction. Seeking the continuing counsel of a trusted spiritual advisor.

C. Practicing these spiritual exercises will result in the growth of faith, hope and love in our lives.

VI. Spirituality has both a primary requirement and a primary reward.

A. The primary requirement is that we place our relationship with God as the most important thing in our lives, the way Jesus taught us.

B. The primary reward is that we shall journey through life in joy with Jesus, the Christ. We become Christ-bearers to others.