



Bringing People to Jesus by What We Do

By Joel Samaha



Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth." But Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him." Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." (John 1:45-49)*

This account of Nathanael is not without some humor, and it might be one of the few times in Scripture where there is arguably a little wit in Jesus' tone. I certainly could understand if there was; you can almost imagine such a comment from a snarky teenager; can anything good come out of South Augusta? After working with teens for so many years,

I have witnessed on numerous occasions their distaste for duplicity. If they smell a fake, they walk.... Something in their make-up loathes contradictions in behavior.

Ironically, they also struggle with the very thing they hate. Even when they deeply desire to do what they feel is both good and correct, they sometimes falter. I hope the blunt side of my personality is not landing me in any trouble here. I feel that teens in general have a valid set of challenges; after all, in Alleluia, we discourage teen dating for some of the very reasons we would reluctantly excuse them for certain behaviors. Developing social relationships, learning how to read social cues, waring against selfishness and insecurity, and obsession with appearances are a partial list of the very real complications of maturing into an adult. Teens struggle with good decision making, and while we must not make excuses for them because of the challenges alone, we can certainly be understanding.

But this leads us to the rub: what is our excuse as adults? We commit to discipleship and "go all in" only

to falter and sometimes fall. It might come as a surprise that many of us, myself included, are more like teenagers than we are perhaps comfortable with admitting. We do not like duplicity any more than a teen, and yet we seem so fragile and prone to proclaiming one thing while doing its opposite. So when we as adults, members of a covenant community, fail to bring others to Jesus because of our daily choices and doings, we might recollect and make sure we have not fallen into a worldly attitude that is simply all too accepting of shortcomings in behavior. Of course, my focus is not mistakes, but a pervasive attitude that approaches our general habit of shortcomings willy-nilly.

Jesus knew the havoc and pain wreaked by Israel's infidelities. And while we might see these major infractions clearly in the Scriptures jumping out at the reader, please mind that all of these major infractions are designed to be curtailed in the very *nit-picky* rules outlined in the Pentateuch. To the point, we might ignore

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Bringing People Closer to Jesus

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the 'foxes in the vineyard,' small dimunitive animals that lay waste, and fail to understand how our lives can fall to pieces when our small faults mature into grave dangers (Song of Songs 2:15). Perhaps they don't seem like much, but it is the 'foxes' that we allow in complacently, without alarm, that often reach maturity and ruin a fruitful harvest. The end result is that Pentecost did not come to a nation, but a remnant. A remnant was called out into the world, not a nation. A remnant witnessed to the world by their actions, not a nation.

Much like a snarky teenager, I would also ask, what good can come out of South Augusta? Jesus has called us to be in the world as his disciples. We have not been called into a monastery with walls, and our *doings* as disciples should not be driven by the influence of the world or an overdramatized fear that it is out to crush us.

Yes, the world can be a scary place, and, yes, seemingly random acts of violence do occur, and yet our actions must continue to prayerfully arise out of the very specific reality that Jesus has placed us in. The core of this reality is the individual and his (her) relationships. I daresay we will struggle to reach others if we ourselves are conflicted and afraid. How can we sincerely engage individuals, and ask them to follow Jesus, when we have become accepting of duplicity in our own lives? How can we remain passionate when we bend rules, and after a short while, bending becomes breaking, and breaking becomes habit? We have been called to the cross, and the cross demands everything. Tame the tongue that destroys the vineyard and sows duplicity and discord. If we want to lead others to Jesus by what we do, we must be careful gardeners, and not become accepting of the fact

U-Turn Team in Australia

Part I

Matthew Eyrich, son of Full Covenant members, Kurt and Annette Eyrich, is spending a year with the U-Turn Missionary Group in Australia. Here is Part I of an interview with him about his experience. He has six months left to serve.

Can you describe your journey to Australia?

My Journey to Australia started with a prophetic word that was given to me while I was visiting the Servants of Jesus Community in July, 2014. After reviewing the word, I prayed

about it, and I discerned that I was being called to do U-Turn Ministry. For the next year or so, I prayed about and worked toward my goal. I worked for Alleluia over the summer and for Firetech (a fire sprinkler installation and inspection company) for the remainder of the year. I had been in contact with the Servants since I last visited in 2014, and I had expressed my interest in joining the U-Turn Team to Chrissy Conlon (the U-Turn leader). When I had raised enough money to pay for my tickets and visa,

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that weeds are just a part of gardening, and that pests are an acceptable part of the harvest.

I am aware of the magnitude of the challenge I lay down. But I would conclude with a final observation I have noticed amongst the teen population. In the absence of a challenge, they fall into waste. I have spent the last ten years of my career in public education being told that we need to accommodate the student. I am often asked the following: "How are you helping the student?"; "Can we do anything to help a certain student pass?"; "Where is my differentiation?"; "Any extra credit available?"; and "How can we bring these scores up?" No doubt all of these *interventions and strategies* sound wonderful to you.

Unfortunately, the end result has made it much easier for students to seemingly succeed without a true challenge, and more likely that teachers will bend rules on their behalf. A pervasive attitude of entitlement and ease has crept in, and the system has become accepting of bending and breaking in a way I never thought would happen when I first started teaching. The end result has been me-

diocrity at best. The small faults that we allowed to waltz in, have laid great waste to the potential harvest. I know what I have written is a challenge to you, but thank God for His challenge to us. Thank God that He has challenged us to keep our lives clean, free of wrongdoing and gossip and slander. I cannot imagine how droll things might get with you folks should we try to start making things easier or begin to accept our shortcomings without an intention to do better.

Bringing people closer to Jesus by what we do requires a focus on our present reality and the individual persons Jesus has placed in front of us. They need not see perfection but they will certainly spot duplicity sooner than later. If we desire purity of heart, seeking the Lord with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind, the Holy Spirit will surely come to our aid.

Joel Samaha is a second generation Alleluia-ite and a Support Group Head. He and his wife, Mollie, were married in 2002, have five children and live in Augusta, GA. They signed the Alleluia Covenant in 2006. Joel is a teacher at Evans High School. They attend St. Joseph Catholic Church, Augusta, GA

Living “Down Under”

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I contacted Chrissy, and she let me apply for a position on the team. After I was accepted into the team, I set out to purchase my tickets and apply for my visa. I was excited to begin this journey, but I had some challenges. It was difficult to find inexpensive tickets and my first visa application was declined. However, God kept the door open and my dad found a ticket for a reasonable price and my second visa application was approved. The next couple of weeks were a blur of packing and preparation for my trip as I worked up until the week before I left. On the 21st of January, I boarded my flight for Australia and arrived in the “Land Down Under” on the 23rd after several hours of flying and an eight-hour delay in Toronto. I’ll be here for the remainder of this year.

You went to Australia to be part of a U-turn Team, what has your experience been in U-Turn?

My experience in U-Turn has been awesome. The team members are really great, and Chrissy is an excellent team leader. As the only team member that did not grow up in Servants of Jesus Community, it took me a bit of time to find my place in the group. However, it wasn’t long before I had eased into household, and we are now a very close knit group. We’re all brothers and sisters, and our relationships are beginning to reflect that. We’re expected to serve, so everything we do, we work to do with a servant’s hearts. We are called to minister to the youth, and we pray over people at the gatherings and youth events. We are learning to live under authority. Chrissy’s the team leader, deciding who is in authority and who has responsibility for each of us. These past couple of months have been very humbling for me, as I’ve had to learn

to serve others before myself, minister to others’ needs and step out in faith, and I’ve had to learn how to work under authority with a positive attitude.

Are there any requirements you must meet to be part of the team?

As I said before, we are called to serve, minister and pray, as well as work under authority. We also abide by a code of ethics. Every member of the team was required to sign an agreement: we agreed to live a healthy and Christian lifestyle, to support the other U-Turn members, to act in a way that reflects our Christian faith, to speak only words that build people up, and to treat others with respect and dignity. We also had to go through a Child Safety Course, since we are working with youth between the ages of twelve and eighteen. I had to apply for a Working with Children Cheque, which is recognized by the Australian government as a requirement to work with children of any age under eighteen. I’m also required to attend all community events, and I at-



tend Catholic Mass at the Centre (they have their own centre where they’re allowed to hold a weekly Charismatic Catholic Mass, as well as a Protestant Service). We are encouraged to have daily prayer times, and when we’re working as a team, we gather together and pray for an extended period of time.

(To be continued next week...)

ACS Alumni Further Their Education



Craig A. Alger, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Alger, graduated from Ashford University in February with a Masters of Business Administration - Information Systems. He currently is a provider of innovative

solutions for datacenter infrastructure at ProSys in Atlanta and lives in Marietta with his wife, Jessica, and two children.



Stephen Alger, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Alger, graduated from Western Governors University on February 16 with a BS in Accounting. He plans to start his own accounting business, with tutoring and

teaching music on the side. He lives in Augusta with his wife, Meghan, and four children.

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All-Area Soccer Team



Congratulations to Mac McBride and Paul Harmon of The Alleluia Community School’s back-to-back State Championship Soccer Team on being chosen to the Augusta Chronicle CSRA All-Area Soccer Team.

ACS Alumni Graduate from Various Institutions

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Charles Chiappetto, son of Mr. Carlos Chiappetto and Mrs. Cathy Chiappetto, graduated from Augusta University on May 16, 2016 with a BS in Respiratory Therapy. He is working at a hospital in Savannah.



Timothy Eyrich, son of Mr. and Mrs. Kurt Eyrich, graduated from University of North Carolina – Charlotte on May 16 with a Masters in Philosophy. He will be focusing on expanding his tutoring company, LociTutor, and works part-time at Charlotte Country Day School and Charlotte United Soccer Club.



Elyssa Klett, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Klett, graduated from the University of Manchester, England, in December 14, 2015, with a Masters in Industrial Psychology. She is living in Columbia, Maryland, hoping to be employed in her field soon.



Christopher Chiappetto, son of Mr. Carlos Chiappetto and Mrs. Cathy Chiappetto, graduated from Georgia Southern University on May 16 with a BS in Nursing. He is working in several clinics and living in Augusta with his two children.



David Firmin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Firmin, graduated from the University of South Carolina, School of Social Work, on May 16 with a Masters in Social Work. He is working at Still



Waters Professional Counseling Service in Martinez. He lives in Augusta with his wife, Corrie, and three children. Greg Klett, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Klett, graduated from Georgia Southern University December, 2015, Magna Cum Laude, with a BS in Forestry. He is working for the Georgia Forestry Commission in South Georgia and lives in Camilla.



Stephen Dominey, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Dominey, graduated from Augusta University on May 13 with a Masters in Physician Assistant. He lives in Augusta with his wife, Rose, and one child.



Mary Ruth Firmin, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Firmin, graduated from Augusta University on May 13 with a Masters in Occupational Therapy. She is working at The Place (Rehab/Long Term Care facility) in Martinez and lives in Augusta.



Keith Sterett, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Sterett, is graduating from Augusta University in August with a Masters in Physician Assistant. He is currently doing rotations and lives in Augusta.



Emily Dresser, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Dresser, Jr., graduated from Augusta University with a BS in Nursing. She plans to do some traveling after taking her boards in July.



Kathryn Samaha Johnson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mark Samaha, graduated from Augusta University on May 13 with a BS in Dental Hygiene. She plans to begin her dental hygienist career in Nashville, TN, where she lives with her husband, Levi.



James Sterett, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Sterett, graduated from Georgia College and State University on May 7 with a BS in Athletic Training. He plans to work in a PT Clinic and attend PT School. He currently lives in Augusta.



Ryan Eyrich, son of Mr. and Mrs. Kurt Eyrich, graduated from Belmont Abbey College on May 16 with a BA in History and double minors in Economics and Government. He is the Southeast Regional Coordinator for Students For Life and lives in Atlanta.



Marian Visintainer, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Visintainer, graduated May 7 from North Georgia University, summa cum laude, with a BS in Mathematics.