

I. Introduction:

These two chapters introduce the idea of life patterns. The idea is that there are some small easy habits that we can build up in our lives which will push the gospel forward. Today we're going to talk about the first two patterns, taking little initiatives and praying and responding.

II. Chapter 11: Taking Little Initiatives:

THIS IDEA THAT the kingdom advances in the course of everyday life for its citizens is implicit in several of the metaphors Jesus used to describe it. It is like yeast, salt, seeds, or the light of a candle. Yeast permeates. So does salt. Seeds germinate and light shines-all without even making a sound!

1. Have you seen the kingdom advance in your everyday life? How?
2. What are some specific ways that the authors suggest to take the initiative to love?
3. Do you regularly greet the people around you, even people you might not know? Why or why not?

III. Chapter 12: Praying & Responding:

OCCASIONALLY I WILL meet a person who has determined to evangelize his entire neighborhood. One couple distributed books to all their neighbors. Later they sent out invitations to everyone, inviting them to attend an evangelistic event in their home. Sometimes such efforts bear fruit-but they often backfire. An initiative of this sort is too impersonal to be well received in a neighbor-to-neighbor situation. By trying to move too far too fast, rapport is lost. And the initiators find themselves left out of things from then on.

1. Have you ever tried to move too far too fast and lost rapport with someone? Have you ever moved too slow and not far enough?
2. What have you done to find a balance between moving too far too fast and too slow and not far enough?

As we pray, God will guide us. Prayer isn't just talking to God. It's interacting acting with him. It involves listening. It includes being predisposed to respond to what God puts in our heart. Prayer often leads to action. It is not a sedentary activity at all. Jesus said that "everyone who asks and keeps on asking receives; and he who seeks and keeps on seeking finds; and to him who knocks and keeps on knocking, the door shall be opened."

4. Is this true? Is this your experience of prayer? Why or why not?

It is also very important to remember the division of labor in this work of bringing people into a relationship with Christ. I can't convict anyone of sin, nor can I show someone what true righteousness looks like. I can't make another other person realize he is building his life on something that is already doomed. I find, in fact, that when I do get into such subjects, the conversation wears thin very quickly. I begin to sound moralistic. It is better to talk to God about them and ask for the Holy Spirit to do the convincing.

5. What does the author mean by "division of labor in this work"? Which part of the labor is your work? Which part is the Holy Spirit's work?

IV. Application & Prayer Points:

6. Take a few minutes to make a map of your neighborhood or your office. Write down the names of your neighbors or coworkers and one or two facts that you know about those people. Share with the group some of the people that God is putting on your heart.
7. Pray for your neighbors or coworkers in your group. Pray for each other that we can take initiatives to reach these people.