

# ***“The Oikos Factor Really is a Factor!”***

## ***Acts 8 (8:1-4)***

**Intro.** – The word οἶκος is Greek for *household*. During Grecian and Roman empires this word not only described the immediate family, but it also included servants, servant’s families, friends and business associates. In other words, an οἶκος back then was one’s *social system* or *sphere of influence* – those related by blood, work or common association.

We have our οἶκος today. It is our *sphere of influence*. One author calls it our *web* – common kinships, friendships and associates. The consensus amongst most students of these matters is that everyone of us have eight to ten people in our *sphere of influence* who are lost – they need Christ. This, then is our οἶκος and it is in this sphere that Jesus calls you and me to *go* and make disciples.

But too many today equate “evangelism” with knocking on a door, presenting the Gospel “cold turkey”... Such can be a part of evangelism, but certainly not even close to the whole of it. The “going” of our Master’s call carries the idea of “as we go” (e.g. to our jobs, families, school, friends etc.) we are to go to *make disciples*. In other words, evangelism must take place with those of whom you and I are already acquainted.

Here then is the crux of this message. We seldom consider the eight or ten people within each of our social systems. Our text makes clear that even under persecution, the early church went about winning the lost. Where did they go to accomplish this? They went to their sphere of influence – family, friends, neighbors, working associates who were outside of Christ, who were lost and looking. Our perception of prospects is so limited. We seldom consider the eight or ten people within our sphere of influences.

*Purpose: to better realize the potential for soul winning all about us*

Through this message, it is our desire that we all be given a fresh reminder that prospects are all around us – that the oikos factor really is a factor.

## **I The Oikos Factor and THE NEW TESTAMENT**

- God focuses on *the household* in the NT. His plan for communicating the Gospel hinges on this factor:
  - A. In the Gospels
    1. Mark 5:19 - after healing a demon possessed man Jesus said, “...*Go home (oikos) to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.*”
    2. Luke 19:9 – after Zaccheus repented “...*Today salvation has come to this house (oikos).*”
    3. John 4:53 – after Jesus healed an official’s son “...*So he and all his household (oikos) believed...*”
    4. Mark 2:14-15 – Levi (tax collector) was invited by Jesus to follow Him. While eating at Levi’s “house” (oikos) at this gather there were tax collectors and “sinners”...
    5. John 1:41 “*He found first his brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah,’*”
  - B. In the Book of Acts
    1. Acts 10 – Peter was called to teach Cornelius (God fearing, devout, generous man...) 10:24 “...*Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends (oikos).*”
    2. Acts 11:4 “*He will bring you a message through which you and all your household (oikos) will be saved.*”
    3. Acts 16:15 – Lydia (business woman) “*When she and the members of her household (oikos) were immersed, she invited us to her home...*”
    4. Acts 16:33 – Philippian Jailer “...*then immediately he and all his household (oikos) were immersed.*”
    5. Point want to bring forefront – Christians, wherever they went they preached Christ!
  - C. In the Epistles
    1. Galatians 6:10 “*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family (oikos) of believers.*”
    2. Ephesians 2:19 “*Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household (oikos).*”

3. James 5:19,20 “*My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*”
4. Point: Paul and other apostles were NOT the only ones spreading the Gospel of Grace:
  - a. thousands of Christians were telling their oikos!
  - b. the phenomenal growth of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church resulted because of a few apostles?! Hardly! Resulted because men/women/young people told and showed their oikos their need for Jesus!
  - c. church historian Kenneth Lataurette “The primary change agent in the spread of the Gospel... were men and women who earned their livelihood in some purely secular manner, and spoke of their faith to those whom they met in this natural fashion.”

NT evangelism simply put = oikos factor. Not a matter of fabulous programs, or impressive facilities and pastorizing preachers. Christians were simply being used of God to win their “oikos”

## II The Oikos Factor and Its IMPORTANCE

- webs of common kinships, friendships/associates remain path most people follow in becoming Xtian:
- A. This Factor is Timeless
    1. Some do think Gospel would have spread faster if 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church could have used the modern media of TV, radio, computer etc....
    2. Not so! – Church had much more effective means of communicating God’s will = oikos factor!
    3. This principle is not only timely, but it is timeless (i.e. it’s Biblical) = primary reason church can grow in the present and will grow in the future...
  - B. This Factor is Truth
    1. Evidence is better understood in light of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church -- why did 1<sup>st</sup> Church grow? – Christians were seeking to “make disciples” from their “oikos” they in turn did likewise...
    2. Contemporary studies reveal the exact same thing:
      - a. Institute American Church Growth asked 14,000 people “what or who responsible for you becoming a Christian?”
      - b. 8 different responses were given from these 14,000 included: 1) special need... 2) walk in... 3) preacher... 4) visitation... 5) Bible School... 6) Revival... 7) Church Program...
      - c. 8<sup>th</sup> response = “friend/relative” = 75% said such was the case...
    3. Importance of the oikos factor cannot be overstated is the point!

## III The Oikos Factor and Its EFFECTIVENESS

- why is this factor so effective? In short, because it is Biblical = God’s way
- A. Provides a Natural Network
    - most logical/means/place for Christian to share Christ is with those whom they know...
  - B. Provides a Receptive People
    - big difference in hearing the Gospel from a trusted friend than hearing from a stranger... it’s a matter called credibility
    - oikos relationships will be *regular* giving the opportunity to not only *tell* but to *show* as well...
  - C. Provides Unhurried Opportunities
    - oikos relationships will be *consistent* giving the opportunity to not only *tell* but to *show*...
  - D. Provides Needed Support
    - natural source for nurturing and supporting one another... Holy Spirit’s work within us...
  - E. Provides Effective Assimilation (involvement)
    1. Proven that unless new Christian get “involved” local church in first six months – 90% eventually will fade away from Christ and His Church.

2. Need for fellowship/learning/service/worship together – can't be overemphasized... oikos effective especially in this area...

E. Provides Constant Source of New Contacts

1. Each new person led to Christ has their own oikos...
2. Process of identifying receptive people is never depleted... each new Christian comes with their own "oikos" = automatically means more new contacts...

Oikos factor really is effective, but then should come as no surprise, it is so Biblical!

**Conclusion:** Mentioned our vision for prospects is so limited. Remember eight to ten people within each of our "oikos"... Want to close with this practical exercise:

Men are going to pass out papers. Want to urge younger and older alike to get one of these papers. Now take a pen/pencil and "fill this paper out..." Write out eight to ten names of people whom you know personally... who are not Christians... Say we have eighty people today: @ eight per person = 640. Let's say there will be some overlap – say 240... still gives us 400 people whom we need to win to the Lord.

Hope to accomplish three significant matters in using this particular exercise to conclude this message:

1. Realize the potential available to us right here...
2. Realize the seriousness of friends and family who are outside of Christ...
3. Realize the personal opportunity to do something about all of this...

Let me conclude with this guarantee: If each person here would take seriously the call of our Lord to evangelize (make disciples), the work of this local church can't help but flourish both now and on into the future unto the glory and honor of Christ her Head!