

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

***Matthew 28:18-20***

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

We have our οἶκος today. It’s our *social system*” or our “sphere of influence.” One author calls it our “web – common kinships, friendships and associates.” The consensus amongst most church growth students is that each of us has eight to ten people in our *sphere of influence* who are lost – they need Christ. This is our οἶκος and it’s in this sphere that Jesus calls you and me to “go and make disciples.”

Many today, however, equate “evangelism” with knocking on a door and presenting the Gospel of Grace “cold turkey.” Such can be a part of evangelism but certainly not even close to being all of it. The “going” of our Master’s call carries the idea of going forth *as we go into our families, jobs, schools etc.*. In other words, you and I are called to make disciples *as we go into the world through our normal day to day activities.* Evangelism is to take place with those of whom you and I are already acquainted.

Here then is the meat of this message. Often our vision for prospects is so limited. We seldom consider the eight or ten people within our *webs*. Through this message, I pray we all are given a fresh reminder that prospects are here, that the οἶκος factor really is a factor and that truth matters in our testimony for Christ!

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

## **I THE OIKOS FACTOR AND THE NEW TESTAMENT**

- God focuses on *the household* in the NT. His plan for communicating the Gospel hinged 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 Zacchaeus 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 2:15 – Levi (tax collector) was invited by Christ to follow Him -- “*And it happened that He was reclining at the table in his house (oikos), and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him.*”
    5. John 1:41 – Andrew, after being called by Christ to follow Him – “*The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is the Christ).*”
  - B. In the Book of Acts
    1. Acts 10 – Peter is 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 11:14 “*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 baptized, she invited us to her home...*”
    4. Acts 16:33 – Philippian Jailer “...*then immediately he and all his household (oikos) were baptized.*”
    5. The point I want to bring to the forefront just now – Wherever Christians went they preached X!!
  - 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” – i.e. the phenomenal growth of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church was the of men/women/young people who told and showed their “oikos” their need for Christ!
  - b. 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, impressive facilities and pastorizing preachers. Christians were simply being used of God to win their “oikos.”

## II THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OIKOS FACTOR

- Webs of common kinships, friendships/associates remain path most people follow in becoming Xtian:

### A. This Factor is Timeless

1. Some do think the Gospel would have spread faster if 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church would have had access to the modern media (TV, radio, the internet etc.)
2. Not so! – 1<sup>st</sup> 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. Modern studies reveal the exact same thing:
  - Illus. (Institute American Church Growth) asked 14,000 people “what or who was responsible for you becoming a Christian?” Eight responses were given. I’ll give you the first seven in no particular order: 1) special need... 2) walk in... 3) preacher... 4) visitation... 5) VBS... 6) revival... 7) church program... All these mentioned as factor for people becoming Christian.
  - 8) friend or relative... = 75% of these 14,000 said such was the case!!
3. My point? The importance of the “oikos” factor cannot be overstated...

## III THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE OIKOS FACTOR

- Why is this factor so effective? Because it’s so Biblical = God’s plan for evangelism

### A. Provides a Natural Network

- most logical means/place for Christians to share Christ – 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*...

### C. Provides Unhurried Opportunities

- oikos relationships will be *regular/consistent* giving opportunity not only to *tell* but also to *show*!

### D. Provides Needed Support

- natural source for nurturing and supporting one another... Holy Spirit’s work within us...

### E. Provides Effective Assimilation

1. Proven fact that unless new Christians get “involved” local church in 6 months time – 90% will eventually fade away from Christ and His Church...
2. Need for fellowship, learning, service and worship together – this cannot be overemphasized... the oikos factor is especially effective in this point alone

F. Provides a 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 Christians comes with their own "oikos" automatically means more/new contacts...

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

**Conclusion:** Mentioned at the beginning of today's message that often our vision for prospects is so limited. Remember eight to ten people within each of our "oikos"... Want to close with this practical exercise:

Couple of men are going to pass out papers. Want to urge young and older alike to get one of these papers. Now take a pen or 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 80 people this morning: @ ten per person = 800. Let's say there will be an overlap of 300... still gives us 500 people whom we know and need to win to the Lord!

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

- 1) Realize the potential available to us right here right now...
- 2) Realize the seriousness of friends and family who are outside of Christ...
- 3) Realize the personal privilege/opportunity to be used of God to do something about it...

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 glory and honor of Christ our Lord!