

MentorNet #32
RECOGNIZING A 'SON OF PEACE'

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“Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this household.’
 If a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on him;
 but if not, it will return to you.”

Jesus (Luke 10:5-6, Holman Christian Standard Bible).

If you mentor workers who start churches or cells, they will seek to carry out the plans that you help them to make. You may want to prepare them to recognize the “child of peace” that Jesus told His disciples to seek in towns where they proclaimed the good news. You can review with your trainees the examples of such ‘children of peace’ found in the Book of Acts and draw guidelines from them.

1. Acts 10:25, 48. **Cornelius** was prepared by God and sent for Peter. Not only did he welcome Peter to enter his house, where he had gathered family members and close friends, he also invited Peter and his co-workers from Joppa to stay for a few days. Cornelius was clearly ready to hear the gospel, but without God’s special preparation Peter would have been unwilling to enter his house because, as a Jew, Peter would have refused to eat food served by a non-Jew. Despite the instructions Jesus had given in Luke 10:7-8 to eat what a son of peace offered, Peter still had to learn to accept other races, their customs and their food.
2. Acts 16:13-15, 40. **Lydia**, a woman, was a ‘daughter of peace’ in Philippi. When she had believed and invited the church planters to stay at her house, they readily accepted. Before they left that town, a church was meeting in her house.
3. Acts 16:29-34. When the **Philippian jailor** learned that his prisoners had not escaped following an earth tremor, he humbly begged of the apostles how he could be saved. They offered salvation by faith to him and to his household. He brought them into his house and cared for him. They the spoke the Word of the Lord to the household and baptized them.
4. Acts 18:1-3 **Aquila and Pricilla** ran a small business. They received Paul into their home where he worked with them making tents until he received outside support. This couple later privately tutored Apollos, a popular public debater, and hosted a Gentile church.
5. Acts 18:7 **Justus**, a devout man whose house was located next door to the synagogue, hosted Paul for a time at Corinth.

You can draw several points from these texts and teach them to your trainees. These include the following (perhaps you can find more):

1. God often prepares family leaders to receive the Gospel.
2. Such persons are often quite devout in their non-Christian religion.

Note: A child of peace might not be peaceful in the way that one would expect. Cornelius, for example, was a professional soldier, trained to lead troops to kill enemies of Rome. Also, the Philippian jailer prior to the earthquake had had Paul and Silas tormented, putting their feet in stocks. Be prepared for God’s surprises!

3. God arranges for praying believers to meet children of peace that he has prepared.
4. Such persons will often invite Christians to explain the gospel to them.
5. Christians must be willing to overcome cultural barriers to share the gospel with them.

Note: It took a special revelation from God for Peter to accept his Christ-given assignment to share the gospel with Gentiles within their own cultural surroundings.

6. Christians must be prepared to speak about the Lord Jesus and the gospel.
7. Such new believers can be baptized in their own homes.
8. When invited to eat, or stay a few days in the home of a new believer, Christians should do so.

Note: Christ's servants must be willing to receive hospitality from such seekers, and not feel that they have to offer payment, which in some cultures is an offence.

9. Such new believers can host a church in their home.

Note: In pioneer fields most new churches are born in the homes of children of peace. A child of peace and his family should not be brought into an existing church, unless for some reason it is impossible to start a new church in their home. Bringing them into an existing church usually stops the process of church reproduction.

10. Church planters in pioneer fields should, if invited, remain in the home of the child of peace following the baptism of the family, like Peter and his helpers from Joppa did in Cesarea, to disciple the new believers and mentor their leaders.

Note: Often a son of peace, if mentored the way the apostles did it, will become a shepherding elder who serves the new church. You, as his mentor, may have to make repeated visits, and to mentor one or more sons of peace together.

Although such children of peace may appear somewhat rustic in their dress and manner, and will lack theological sophistication, others listen to them, and they know how to influence their households and friends. Western mentors must allow their national co-workers to try first to work with children of peace before rejecting them as unsuitable for leadership.

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