

Sponsorship The Most Important Job of All

As our focus is on sponsorship this newsletter, we thought we would highlight some of the thoughts Stephen Bryant (The Upper Room Handbook of Emmaus) had on the subject. Mr. Bryant points out that there is *wise* and *unwise* sponsorship. He distinguishes the two as *wise sponsorship is purposeful and prayerful; unwise sponsorship is haphazard and undiscerning.* (pg. 23) The purpose of sponsoring people is for the ultimate goal of building up the body of Christ, to bring individual, and then family, workplace, congregational and community spiritual revitalization. Sponsorship is the first gift of agape love the pilgrim will experience. He outlines several types of persons to especially consider sponsoring, and stresses that Emmaus is for active Christians:

1. *Church Leaders, both pastors and laypersons;
2. *Dependable church members who are the quiet backbone of the church;
3. *Less active members who need their awareness of grace rekindled and their commitment renewed;
4. *Christians who are hungry for *something more* and want to grow spiritually;
5. *Members and leaders who represent a cross section of the church and who will help Emmaus remain sound theologically, centered on the essentials of our common faith, and open in different perspectives; and
6. *Respected laypersons and clergypersons whose participation support, and leadership will encourage others to take the Walk, and will build a sound, balanced leadership base for the movement in the community.

While Mr. Bryant stresses that Emmaus is right for many people, there are some cases that Emmaus may not be the right choice at that time, and he gives the following examples of questionable sponsorship:

1. *Non-Christians and persons with no relationship to Jesus Christ.
2. *Persons undergoing a severe emotional crisis who are emotionally unstable (but who may benefit at another time).
3. *Persons who decide not to make a Walk after being presented the opportunity.
4. *Christian whose theology and/or practice is notable different or incompatible with the traditional theology and practice represented by the Walk to Emmaus.
5. **Church hoppers* members who continuously have an ax to grind against the church.
6. *Persons looking for another spiritual high or way to *arrive.*

These guidelines are taken directly from the manual, pages 21-22. The book, Day Four: The Pilgrim*s Continued Journey that you received in your Fourth Day packets upon completing your walk has a wonderful chapter about effective sponsorship. Read it! Briefly, it outlines in detail the following ten steps following your prayerful consideration of a prospective pilgrim:

1. *Pray for the person*s openness to hear God*s call.
2. *Make an appointment to talk with the person OR COUPLE (more on the equal commitment rule later!).
3. *Extend the invitation*invite them to attend for the sake of an improved relationship with Jesus Christ. Explain the basic elements of a Walk, answer their questions, make them comfortable. Some people need more information than others. Explain that there

are many wonderful events that you may not want to share with them to make their Walk more enjoyable, as there are NO SECRETS!

4.*Ask them to make a commitment by filling out the registration application.

5.*Continue to pray. Gather agape letters.

6.*Support the Walk through your prayers and presence from Send Off to Closing.

Check in with the pilgrim*s family to see if there are any needs.

7.*Encourage the pilgrim in their Fourth Days; Help them find a reunion group, attend gatherings with them.

8.*Help the Pilgrim re-enter their church.

9.*Inform the Pilgrim about how they can serve in the Emmaus community in future Walks.

10.*Help the pilgrim sponsor others. (continued on page 4)

Nuts and Bolts (continued)...

Now what is this about *Equal Commitment?*

 Part of our letter of agreement with the Upper Room in Nashville states that *husbands and wives should make an equal commitment to participate* in taking an Emmaus Walk. The guidelines in the Stephen Bryant manual are clear about this topic (pg. 26-27). It states:

1.*The rule guards against the Emmaus experience becoming a separating influence in a marriage.

2.*When the rule is followed, Emmaus can indirectly strengthen the spiritual bond in a marriage and family.

3.*The rule results in increased participation of many grateful husbands and wives (usually husbands) who probably would not have attended an Emmaus weekend otherwise, but did so in order to make it possible for their spouse to participate.

The manual also clearly states that the rule is *Wisdom, not law.* There will always be cases where husbands and wives do not share theological views, or one spouse absolutely does not want to participate in a weekend.

*We hope that these guidelines will help you in the process of sponsorship if you feel God*s tug on your heart to sponsor a potential pilgrim. If you have further questions, please contact a board member. The manual has additional information.