

Lessons from a Bowl Breakfast

Ready:

"Go out to the highway and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be full."

-Luke 14:23b

Set

Okay, here's a little peek at my life. . . It's 7:25 a.m. on Thursday, December 28, 2006, and it's "showtime" for the Alamo Bowl/Alamo Cafe FCA Breakfast. The head table is filled with head football coaches, athletes, bowl dignitaries and pastors. The bands are playing, and at 7:30, the University of Iowa Hawkeyes and the University of Texas Longhorns enter the ballroom to the delighted cheers of 600 local student athletes, coaches and bowl fans.

For a good month, FCA had been planning every detail of the event. Speakers, testimonies, music, 300+ bowl athletes and coaches, and pastors are were lined up, along with more than 600 local athletes and coaches who attend as guests. It took a tremendous amount of planning (down to questions such as: bagels or muffins?) and a lot of money, all enjoyed, eaten and spoken in only an hour and fifteen minutes. It was a lot of work for one very quick outreach event.

As I reflected on the month of planning, funding, inviting and executing that single morning's breakfast, I was stuck by Luke's parable of the Great Dinner. "A man was giving a dinner and invited many," and at the dinner hour he sent his servant out to "say to those who had been invited: Come! For everything is ready now. But they all alike began to make excuses" (Luke 14: 16-18a).

For 14 years, I've been putting on bowl breakfasts (mind you, I'm not complaining!), and I add another nine years of luncheons, dinners, camps and retreats, bringing the total number of outreaches to well over 100. WOW! And to this day, the one thing that really fries my bacon is what I see during and after the function: empty seats, and tickets not picked up at the Will Call table. I am amazed that even when a quality program filled with college coaches and athletes and professional players is offered, people still don't show. They say they're coming, even order and pay for the tickets, and don't show.

Then, I come to my Biblical sense and begin to get an idea of how God must feel about the eternal party He has planned and paid for in its entirety. He also will have many empty seats and numerous tickets left waiting at Will Call. When I look at all the work, planning and money that goes into FCA outreach events so that those invited can see and taste the goodness of God, I can get very frustrated and discouraged. That's when I must continue on in my passage in Luke 14 to verse 23: "Go out to the highway and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be full." My point? We don't get a "walk in the park" here. Our frustrations and discouragements do not allow for us to make excuses or give up, but instead spur us to be obedient to the Lord and His Word: to GO OUT and COMPEL THEM TO COME IN.

God's Word speak volumes to us of His compassion, His faithfulness and His perseverance to win humankind. If God didn't give up, neither can I! My prayer for you, the FCA coach, athlete or volunteer this 2007 is that together, we will not be discouraged, but will overcome as we go out and COMPEL THEM TO COME IN!

Go

1. Do you get discouraged when you see others pass up opportunities to get closer to God?
2. What can you do to "compel them to come in"?
3. Name some people you can pray for--that they will get closer to God--then pray for them.

Workout

Matthew 28:16-20

Luke 14:15-24

Bible Reference:

Luke 14



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