

CONTACTS

by Winston Evans

There is no mysterious technique that will work for everybody. The few observations and suggestions made here will help any believer who sincerely wants to do a better job with contacts.

BEST PREPARATION FOR SUCCESSFUL CONTACTING

(1) Study the Teachings - (2) Burning desire - "Stop being conscious of your frailties; therefore, have perfect reliance in God. Let your heart burn with the desire to serve His cause and promote His Mission - then you will observe how eloquence and the power to change human hearts will come as a matter of course." (Shoghi Effendi) (3) Pray and act - Say "yes" to the Light.

No one can tell another how to make contacts - One or more of the following suggestions might lead to opportunity for talk.

- (1) May I give you a message of hope?
- (2) There's something going on in the world you should know about.
- (3) There's a new spirit of unity operating throughout the world today.
- (4) Do you know about the Greatest Story being told in world today?
- (5) Destiny of America? Destiny of the world?
- (6) Would you like to know about "The great age to come?"

If prospect shows interest - Make an occasion of telling the story - Make a date for talk when there will be ample time, etc.

Preparation for talk or interview

- (1) Pray and act - Get as much of background of prospect as possible -
- (2) Be assured of divine assistance - (3) Prestige literature - "Appreciations of Baha'i Faith" - A Chicago Tribune Reprint, Life Magazine Reprint - other literature suitable to inquirer - Tell the story with love and enthusiasm, but impersonally and not aggressively - We can be bold and fearless if we have love but never force the issue - Never argue.

REFERRED LEADS

If inquirer shows interest and has caught some of the Spirit of the Cause, make a date for more talk or fireside, etc. What is equally important - ask the friend if he knows others who are seeking or might like to hear our story - This is most important and is the technique used by all successful men in the Selling or Promoting fields.

What can we do now to stimulate our desire and increase our ability to make contacts - Action is needed now - The situation becomes critical when we get in the habit of waiting for people to come to us - A vague longing is not enough - At the present hour, every Soul is hanging in the balance - "Ultimately all the battle of life is with the individual. There is no amount of organization that can cause or prevent victory or failure or resolve the inner problems of life at a critical moment - Particularly at times like these, when great forces are loose in the world. We see some weak souls become miraculously strong and some strong souls fail." Contacting and teaching at this time, we are told, will produce two effects - First, it keeps the individual who tells the story in the Light and it will shorten the dark period for the world as a whole.

MAKING CONTACTS

The Aim

When a Baha'i endeavours to make a friend for the Faith, his responsibility as a believer is not merely that of informing the new contact that Baha'u'llah came and that the Baha'i Faith is a living world religion today. Far more than this, his paramount aim should surely be to so impress the enquirer, in the first instance, with the significance of his Faith that the seeker develops a conscious desire for deeper knowledge of the Teachings and of the fundamental verities of the Cause.

The Method

To accomplish this end, the Baha'i must learn to seek first his hearer's own personal needs and then to introduce the Faith in such a way that it appears to be, as in truth it is, the one thing which will fully satisfy those needs. It is first through this personal interest in the Teachings, rather than a general understanding of the Faith as a whole, that almost every new contact is seriously attracted to the Message of Baha'u'llah.

The Attitude

If the Baha'i is to be able to meet and give the Message to every person who crosses his path, it is important for him to manifest a spirit of love, warmth and friendliness to all. In the words of the Master:

"O army of God! Through the protection and help vouchsafed by the Blessed Beauty - may my life be a sacrifice to His loved ones - ye must conduct yourselves in such a manner that ye may stand out distinguished and brilliant as the sun among other souls. Should any of you enter a city, he should become a centre of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving-kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry out and say: 'This man is unquestionably a Baha'i, for his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the attributes of the Baha'is!' Not until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and Testament of God."

His approach to his fellow-men will be one of understanding and appreciation of their qualities, characteristics, talents and potentialities. As a Baha'i, he will learn to have a sincere interest in the enquirer's attitudes, opinions, problems, needs and circumstances. And above all, he will become a willing listener to the seeker's comments and enquiries, and will, from them discover the key to that individual's spiritual condition and need. Concerning this the Guardian has written:

"Every laborer in those fields, whether as travelling teacher or settler, should, I feel, make it his chief and constant concern to mix in a friendly manner with all sections of the population, irrespective of class, creed, nationality, or color, to familiarize himself with their ideas, tastes, and habits, to study the approach best suited to them, to concentrate, patiently and tactfully, on a

few who have shown marked capacity and receptivity, and to endeavour, with extreme kindness, to implant such love, zeal, and devotion in their hearts as to enable them to become in turn self-sufficient and independent promoters of the Faith in their respective localities."

The Practical Approach

Every Baha'i individually, as well as every Baha'i Community collectively, has the responsibility of telling the peoples of his locality about the Faith. Fundamentally, this fact seems to imply that every person a Baha'i meets should be given at least an initial opportunity of hearing of the Faith. More still it implies that we must make special efforts to meet, and tell, more and more people about Baha'u'llah and His Message. Of these "Special Efforts" the Guardian has written:

"Let him also attempt to devise such methods as association with clubs, exhibitions, and societies, lectures on subjects akin to the teachings and ideals of his Cause such as temperance, morality, social welfare, religious, and racial tolerance, economic co-operation, Islam, and comparative Religions, or participation in social, cultural, humanitarian, charitable, and educational organizations, and enterprises, which will open up to him a multitude of ways and means whereby he can enlist successively the sympathy, the support, and ultimately the allegiance of those with whom he comes in contact."

To our family, friends and fellow-workers; at home, at the office and at social functions; by joining clubs and associations; by attending classes and study-groups; by corresponding with people at a distance; and by each of us studying for ourselves our own environment and discovering our own unique opportunities for speaking of the Faith, will we ultimately make the Cause known to all those in our locality.

In Conclusion

Believers individually, Groups and Assemblies can not rely solely on newspaper publicity and advertising, on public meetings and displays, on study-classes, firesides and social functions, to attract new enquirers. Vitally important though these aspects of Baha'i activity are in deepening the knowledge of the seeker, only a limited number of people will be initially attracted to the Cause through them. It is personal contact and follow-up which has always been, and will probably continue to be, the most fruitful method of drawing individuals into contact with our Faith. It is their unity, and love for each other, which enables them to become channels through which the Divine Love will pour, and it is this Divine Love that, flowing through the teachers, makes the only real contact with the souls of the people they meet.