

Jesus vs. Religion

LAST MONTH A CATHOLIC PRIEST named John Zenz began teaching a Bible study at Dick O'Dow's Irish Pub in Birmingham, Michigan. Zenz's refreshing method of evangelism—a Tuesday-night discussion about God and current events called "Theology on Tap"—is taking the gospel in a non-threatening manner to a place where people with real problems are looking for relevant answers.

Apparently this mixture of booze and Bibles was a hit with tavern patrons. *The Detroit Free Press* said 150 people crammed in the back of the bar to hear Zenz while they sipped Guinness and Bass Ale. About 50 of them stood, since there weren't enough seats. (Some of us wish we had that problem in church on Sundays!)

I hope Zenz's philosophy sparks a trend. Imagine what could happen if compassionate Christians took Bible studies into every bar, pool hall and night club in America. But it probably won't happen—not as long as we cling to our holier-than-thou attitudes.

I can already hear the critics whining. "That is so disgusting," the Pharisees complain. "You can't allow people to listen to God's holy Word while they drink the devil's liquor!"

You don't think Jesus would take His message into a pub? Actually, He spent most of His time there, hanging out with tax collectors, prostitutes and the riff-raff of Jerusalem while the Pharisees stood outside and sneered. While He extended mercy to love-starved sinners, the religious folks smugly griped that His followers didn't dress holy, use the right religious jargon

or wash their hands properly.

I think you'll be inspired to break free from your own pharisaical attitudes when you read our report on Herbie Shreve, the bold evangelist who leads the Christian Motorcyclists Association (page 46). The burly men on his ministry team don't look like deacons. Instead of wearing dark suits, most of them sport long hair, tattoos and pierced ears.

But they are winning hard-core bikers to Jesus, and their example will stir you to reach sinners in your own backyard. If you are willing to do something daring to reach the lost, consider these options:

- Find out where children play in a needy neighborhood in your city. Then get permission from an apartment

manager or city park official to host an afternoon kids' camp—with plenty of games, refreshments, puppets and Bible stories.

- Turn part of your church building into a youth center, complete with video arcade, skateboard rink, basketball court and lounge. Then open it to the community and see what happens. One church's youth group in Concord, California, has grown from 60 to 500 since they launched a similar outreach in 1993.

- Start a Bible study in your home or apartment clubhouse using the Alpha course—a nonreligious, 10-week video class that has introduced thousands of British people to faith in Christ in the last few years. Our article about Alpha in this issue (page 58) includes information on how to order it.

- Invade your local bar with your own version of "Theology on Tap."

You might be surprised when the bartender tells his customers: "BYOB—Bring Your Own Bible."

People out there are thirsty for God. Let's give them what they need to drink. □

FIRST WORD

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