

BE NATURAL

Rob Robinson

Years ago I saw a sign at the server's station in a restaurant that was a popular chain at the time. The message instructed the servers to greet new diners in this manner: *Smile real big. Say, "Howdy, y'all! Welcome to Po' Folks!" Be natural.* I found that amusing. It seemed to me that if a server had to be told to say howdy-ya'll- welcome-to-po'-folks then that would not be the natural way for them to greet someone.

Well, what I want to write about today is being natural as we Christians try to talk to others about Christ and the gospel, especially with regard to inviting others to Friend and Neighbor Day. It's not smiling big and saying, "Howdy, ya'll. How about coming to Friend and Neighbor Day." Every Sunday, in classes and church services, we talk about being Christians in our everyday lives: living the new life in Christ, trying to be Christ-like. Our goal is that thinking, talking and acting like Jesus Christ will become natural for us. Wouldn't it be great if living the new life in Christ, being conformed to his likeness, became natural for us?

That's the whole idea behind Friend and Neighbor Day. This event is based on the assumption that the best means the church has of reaching unchurched people is through people they already know, or at least are acquainted with, on a personal level. What could be more natural than friends, neighbors and relatives? These people know people who are like Jesus Christ: people of faith in Christ who are believing, kind, helpful, forgiving, generous, encouraging, loving, caring, sympathetic, compassionate and humble. Christians are not perfect people (that might be unnatural, I suppose). But we do make a serious, consistent effort to apply the teachings of Jesus to our lives, and that makes a difference in who we are. People notice that sort of thing. It gets their attention. They realize that we are the way we are because we believe something. So they are not surprised if we mention it and try to talk to them about it once in a while. They may even be expecting it when we invite them to church or show an interest in their spiritual well-being, because they know that's the kind of people we are. So what could be more natural than that?