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PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Ed Nichols

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If the term "evangelism" means telling someone how to be saved, then the process stops when one gets saved. If the term "evangelism" means to make someone a disciple, then the process continues and is self-perpetuating. The definition of the term "evangelism" should be the Great Commission (Matt. 28.19-20).

The actual making of disciples according to the Great Commission is the meaning of the term evangelism. The Great Commission was given as an example of how to evangelize the world. Training although necessary, is not mentioned except that one is to be a disciple. The three parts of the term evangelism are going, baptizing, and teaching.

The first part is going. The given is that one has already been baptized, is a disciple, taught, and have an understanding of soul-winning. The going is for the express purpose of evangelizing or soul-winning. The taking of the good news to a lost person. Evangelism is the making of disciples for Jesus Christ, who in turn are to go and make more disciples for Jesus Christ. Evangelism is going in the power of the Holy Spirit and presenting a lost soul with hope of eternal life.

After acceptance of the gospel, the evangelist (the going person) is to begin the process of making a disciple. The next step for the Christian is to become a disciple, to be baptized and to learn that the salvation experience is to lead to obedience and then to discipleship.

Along with the going and the baptizing is teaching. Teaching is necessary for new Christians to become aware of the need to evangelize the lost. New Christians must become acutely aware of the Great Commission and its imperative command to them to make disciples.

Evangelism for is the fulfilling of the Great Commission by leading a lost soul to Jesus, baptizing and teaching them to lead lost souls to Jesus, and seeing them accomplish the requirements of the Great Commission to make disciples who lead others to Jesus. Evangelism is a complete cycle, a soul is saved, that soul tells someone else how to be saved, that new saved soul, tells someone else, and on and on. Evangelism in its simplest definition is "make disciples for Christ" who will "make disciples for Christ."

OBSTACLES TO EVANGELISM EXPERIENCED BY THE EARLY CHURCH.

Some of the obstacles to evangelism for the early church were Judaizers, Knostics, persecution, paganism, a lack of doctrinal foundation, and no formal guidelines.

The early church as a whole was filled with prejudice toward the Gentiles. Judaizers, Christian Jews, espoused the belief that Gentiles needed to become Jews first to become Christian. All new converts to Christianity would have to be circumcised and follow the plan the Judaizer Jewish Christians believed to be the requirements to be saved. The additional requirement which Judaizers added to the gospel, circumcision, was eliminated at the Jerusalem Council. This decision did not change the Judaizer's attitude or requirement to become a Christian. The decision of the Jerusalem Council confirmed that salvation is Christ only not Christ and circumcision.

Another obstacle of the early church came in the form of a group call Knostics. This was an intellectual group of people who rationalized their existence and determined that they could know God on the basis of nature and other given phenomena. They were the center of their world, not God.

Persecution was a major obstacle for the early church. The leaders were locked-up, and even be killed. Many died for their faith in horrible ways. The attempt to stamp out Christianity by death and persecution probably had a disquieting effect on the number of outward professing believers.

The world in which the early church lived was a world full of sin and paganism. Prostitution types of worship were a major part of many of the religions of that day. The worship of sex was the major religion. Sin and the results of sin were everywhere and most acceptable. The worship of man made sex gods was a religion of anything goes.

Although not as big an obstacle as persecution or prostitution, the lack of clear doctrinal foundations was an obstacle too. Basic belief was available as Paul preached it as a doctrine of salvation. The development of other doctrines would take centuries.

How to act in church, or as a Christian would be another obstacle to the early church. No formal guidelines had been set for services, fellowships, baptism, or prayer meetings. Paul attempted and seemed to be involved in establishing what one could consider to be the "doing of all things in decency and in good order." According to Paul a fellowship could become a love feast or a gluttonous feeding frenzy, both of which were unacceptable Christian worship Paul's opinion.

The obstacles were many, these are just a few. Evangelism flourished in spite of, or even because of, the obstacles the early church faced.

PLANNING AND PROMOTION OF AN EVANGELISTIC CAMPAIGN.

The planning of a local church evangelistic campaign must start with prayer and prayer must continue throughout the whole campaign. There should be a program of prayer in a number of different ways. It should include cottage prayer meetings, church prayer groups, and individual quiet time prayer for the evangelistic campaign (revival). After the praying for the planning has begun, the planning can begin.

Planning will require the use of several committees. Committees similar to those used by Billy Graham and other mass evangelistic campaigns can also be used for church evangelism. Committees needed are prayer, publicity, counseling, ushers, outreach, youth, music, and soul-winning committees.

The promoting of a local church evangelistic campaign will require extensive use of the media. The publicity committee will use the newspapers, television, radio, and even tracts in stores or passed out at the local super stores.

A committee to call all church members, active and inactive to support the campaign with their presence is a good idea.

The pastor has to promote the campaign everywhere.

Soul-winning training should be conducted and visits made prior to the campaign.

Proper planning, promoting, and prayer are the keys to a good local church evangelistic campaign.

VISITATION EVANGELISM

"Visitation evangelism" is a term which was used by teachers in the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board Lay Evangelism Schools. The methodology was primarily designed to get the trainee to do a personal home visits for the purpose of presenting the gospel in testimony and tract. Numerous variations which can be used for visitation evangelism are available. One method was presented by Dr. Harry Piland, Associate Pastor and Minister of Education at First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas to a group of ministers of education. Harry's view on visitation is that growing churches, for the most part, still have an organized program of visitation. He also expressed that evangelism is doing all of the Great Commission. Making disciples is the end results of visitation evangelism. Most active soul-winners will agree with Dr Piland. A methodology based on the above premise can start with the knowledge that visitation evangelism is important. Whatever training, spiritually and, or mentally, a person who will visit must have a plan of action which will lead a lost person to Christ.

After some training in procedures of a visit, the soul-winner should make an appointment to visit in a home. Today this common courtesy is almost required one is to be successful in obtaining access to busy people. This step can also lay some ground work for later discussion at the visit.

One must always be on time. Request the peoples undivided attention, if necessary. Be assured that the soul-winner is about to begin the most important discussion in the lost person's life. The Christian visitor will be guided by the Holy Spirit of God. It helps if one has a partner to assist with diverting any distractions, when appropriate.

Break the ice by working a specific plan. One can use several plans in combination depending on the leadership of the Holy Spirit. One plan is called F.O.R.M. and it means family, organization, religion, and message. Talk about the lost person's family. Ask about their occupation. Determine any church background (religion). Then get to the meaning or message of the visit. Ask them what their relationship is to Jesus.

From this point on, be prepared to give a brief testimony. Know some scripture designed to present the gospel. One may prefer what is called the Roman road or another form from a simple tract. Call for a decision. Let the Holy Spirit assist both of you. Pray with the newly saved individual.

The soul-winner can seal the decision with some scripture on how to be sure one is saved. One such scripture is "He who comes to me, I will in no wise cast out." That is a rough paraphrased but the text may be read from John 6.37-40.

If anyone else has been listening at all, ask them to make a similar decision to accept Christ as Lord, if they are led to do so. They usually do. Pray with all those present and make a follow-up appointment to begin the disciple making process. Follow-up!

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