1993

The making of an evangelist

Jarrott, Reginald Edward

Point Halloran, Qld. : T.M. Pryce-Davies, 1993.

https://myrrh.library.moore.edu.au:443/handle/10248/6173

Downloaded from Myrrh, the Moore College Institutional Repository
The leading of the Lord, in my life as an evangelist, was like unfolding a tapestry. There were many segments making up the whole. This seems to be the pattern for the making of an evangelist, for evangelists are not man-made but God-made. This statement does not mean that the man does not need to equip himself as best he can. The statement on preaching that it is truth through personality, is true of the two sides of evangelism. That is, God making the evangelist and man equipping.

Some have been given the gift of special ability in winning people to Christ. These are the true evangelists (Ephesians 4:11). In Isaiah 61:1-3, there is a passage which Christ quoted of Himself, because it referred to His ministry on earth. Dr Billy Sunday, a famous American evangelist, with a tremendous record of soul winning, always had his Bible open at the Isaiah passage every time he preached, to remind himself what his ministry was all about.

The aim of evangelism as set out in a definition from the Archbishops committee on evangelism in 1918 stated:

'To evangelise is to so present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to accept Him as their Saviour, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of the Church'.

This statement is a well-accepted definition.

Billy Sunday's preaching had that very aim as its base and seeing that he lived from 1862-1925, it is just possible that only towards the end of his life did he see that 1918 declaration.

The unfolded tapestry and special areas of influence in my life

I do not intent to go through all the difficulties, and life situations, God used to make me an evangelist. Part One of this book has set them out more fully.

I wish to make a statement of policy I held, and to point out some of the great milestones in my life to finally bring me to the evangelistic ministry. Some of the milestones appear ordinary, others seem to be more interesting. I have tried to hold the policy never to try to 'engineer' myself into a position, but let God develop things His way. My belief has been that God can, and will, get me to 'the place of His appointment' if my life is open to Him. If we do not let this happen under His guidance, then we can make grave errors. After all, it is Christ's prerogative, as Lord of the harvest, to send us to the kind of work we do in the harvest. Some of the segments of the patterns in the tapestry are:

* Before my conversion to Christ

The influence of:

* A Christ honouring home.
* A ministry in the local church by various men of God.
* Godly Sunday School teachers and Christian Endeavour leaders.
* Leadership openings in a small way in the local church.

**After my conversion**: 

The opportunities to 'test the waters' of evangelism:
* As a local preacher, Sunday School superintendent and leader of Christian Endeavour in the local church.

**As Evangelistic Superintendent of south Brisbane district Christian Endeavour Union.** This gave me the opportunity to conduct regular open-air meetings with district Christian Endeavourers at a tram (street car for American readers) terminus in a Brisbane suburb, with Bible study led by myself in a local Christian's house. These meetings were held every Saturday evening (weather and other engagements permitting). As Evangelistic Superintendent, I was able to contact other societies of Christian Endeavour and address rallies and generally encourage young people to evangelise.

*Later in hospital, as a result of a life-threatening work accident. God underlined for me in a new way, the brevity of life, and the need for God, in hours of great and sustained suffering. These truths were invaluable in later ministry.

*Being thrust into a war situation as a soldier, and seeing death and the dreadful toll taken on some lives. Also with other soldiers of the Cross. To have for a little while the fellowship, in prayer meeting and others ways, of a Godly chaplain.

*Sometimes in army life, it was necessary to stand alone without fellowship or, in some outposts, seemingly the only Christian. My soldier mates dubbed me 'The Reverend Gentleman'. I appreciated my soldiering days as a great help in my evangelistic ministry.

*It was in the army that I felt the call of God to the ministry.

*I studied for an entrance examination towards the end of World War II and entered the Theological College of the Baptist Union of Queensland in March 1945, and started my first pastorate at the same time. Five years of study, and three pastorates later helped me to see, from an evangelistic point of view, the opportunities and needs of the local church areas.

*In the ministry*

* After leaving college, I had some other pastorates and God was guiding to give me evangelistic background in every one. A poor working-class area, heavily Roman Catholic; a country area with many outstations; a tourist and provincial city area; and inner suburban area; and industrial and mining area. Later in New Zealand, I had some experience in pastoring the Main City church in Auckland. All these pastorates gave me tremendous experience in working with all classes of people - invaluable to the training of a budding evangelist.
In 1961, after about 17 years of pastorates, I struggled with the call of God to be an itinerant evangelist. I prayed the prayer of Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:10), which I just happened to come upon. I only intended my prayer to ask for a place of ministry in a general sense, but God had other plans. The prayer goes like this, 'And Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me and that thou wouldst keep me from evil that it may not grieve me!" and God granted him that which he requested'.

I expected God to bless me too, but never dreamed how much and what large scope for service He intended to give me.

My ministry as an itinerant evangelist

* I was appointed to head up the evangelistic committee of the Baptist Union of Queensland, as State Evangelist, and to form the Department of Evangelism (later Department of Evangelism and Mass Media).

* I had only been in it about one month when the secretary of the Queensland Council of Churches Evangelistic Committee came to our Evangelistic Committee meeting to seek my release for some months to be Field Secretary full-time, to help in the arrangements of the Leighton Ford Crusade in Queensland. Because of my position, I was virtually the Queensland director and was known as such with an office in Queen Street in Brisbane.

* I had to travel to various centres in Queensland seeking to set up crusades, with a number of committee chairmen and their committees in Brisbane and elsewhere. My duties took me travelling to outlying centres with Leighton Ford and his wife and their singer Irv Chambers. Later, God gave me the privilege of being invited by Leighton Ford to spend some time with them in their Sydney crusade.

* God opened further doors of opportunity to work with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, evangelists including Dr Graham.

* Later, God opened the door for me to be secretary of the Queensland Council of Churches Evangelistic committee and this gave contact with other international evangelists.

* My work as director of the Baptist evangelistic work brought me into contact with a number of Australian evangelists in conferences in other states.

* Later, I was invited to attend a number of world or international conferences on evangelism in Berlin, Singapore, Tokyo, Lausanne (Switzerland), Amsterdam.

* Doors opened for me to attend a number of schools of evangelism.

* This is not meant to be a 'name dropping' session, but a great learning and developing experience, and to give God the glory in showing His marvellous way of answering the prayer of Jabez in my life.
The tapestry has unfolded in many ways but these are sufficient to show how God certainly had His hand on my life, saying to my heart, 'This is the way, walk in it'.

Some things which have been learned:

1. Be open to the guidance of God.
2. Ask God to show you your task.
3. Prepare yourself spiritually and mentally.
4. Learn that God does things in His way, not always in ours.
5. He fits different evangelists for different tasks.
6. He teaches us by the lives of the almost unknown and the well known. We can learn great lessons by the example and love for the lost from almost all humble saints of God.
7. We can learn from scholars who are evangelists and from evangelists who are not scholars.
8. Make sure the message you give is a direct and authentic word from God.
9. It is never necessary to pull strings to bring about a desired result.
10. Let God work out our life's pattern in His way.