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The making of an evangelist

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Standing with the Outstanding Evangelists

While it has been true of my life to learn great lessons in evangelism from both the uneducated and the highly educated, from the most humble Christian and the outstanding Christian, and I thank God for all of those whom I have loved in Christ, this study is one of those great warriors of the Cross, who reached the hardened hearts of men and women with the Gospel.

I salute them, and feel humbled in their 'presence' as their lives showed up many inadequacies in my own ministry and spiritual preparation, and am grateful to God for teaching me much through them all.

It is a great thing to study the outstanding evangelists of history and note some excellent traits in most if not all.

These are:

1. Their passion for souls.
2. Their prayer life.
3. Their particular ministries.
4. Their powerful effects, which we need to note and learn.

This study is really a 'guide line' and not a comprehensive study. The more comprehensive study is the reader's task.

The passion for souls

I am indebted to an extract which came into my hands of how evangelists and missionary/evangelists felt. I am indebted to that extract and its compiler not known to me.

George Whitfield, famous English evangelist said, 'O Lord, give me souls, or take my soul'.

Henry Martin, a missionary to India prayed, 'Here let me burn out for God'.

David Brainerd, missionary to the North American Indians, 1718-1747 declared, 'Lord, to thee I dedicate myself. Oh accept of me, and let me be thine forever. Lord, I desire nothing else, I desire nothing more'.

Thomas a Kempis, 1379-1471, said, 'Give what Thou wilt, and when Thou wilt. Set me where Thou wilt and deal with me in all things as Thou wilt'.

Dwight L. Moody, implored, 'Use me then, Saviour, for whatever purpose and in whatever way Thou mayest require. Here is my poor heart, an empty vessel; fill it with Thy grace!'.

John McKenzie, as a young missionary candidate on the banks of the Lossie: 'O Lord, send me to the darkest spot on earth!'.
"Praying Hyde, missionary in India and great apostle of prayer said, 'Father, give me these souls, or I die'.

Mrs Comstock, a missionary in India, uttered this prayer of parting when she sent her children home: 'Lord Jesus, I do this for Thee'.

A careful reading of pages 346-357 of Paulus Scharpff's "History of Evangelism" are the names of many famous evangelists of a variety of countries.

*A few of the more outstanding from 1700 onwards:*

* John Wesley (1703-1791)
* Charles Wesley (1707-1788)
* George Whitfield (1714-1770)
* The Moravians and Zinzendorf
* Charles Simeon (1754-1836)
* Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843)
* Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899)
* William Booth (1829-1843)
* J. Wilbur Chapman (1859-1918)
* Gipsy Smith (1860-1940)
* J.R. Mott (1861-1955)
* Reuben A. Torrey (1856--1928)
* Billy Sunday (1862-1925)
* W.P. Nicholson (1920-1940*)
* Billy Graham (1918- )

These were evangelists of different types and ministries, but were great soul winners.

Besides Dr Billy Graham, who is one of our present evangelists and those of the famous Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, there have been men of the Calibre of Dr Oswald Smith, Dr Hyman Appleman, Mordecai Ham (who led Billy Graham to Christ), Rev. John Ridley (the famous Australian evangelist), and many others both in Australia and overseas.

Some other things were common to their ministries. They were (or are) men of:

* Great dedication, conscious of their calling.
* Consistent, powerful prayer.
* Passionate concern for the lost.
* A close walk with God.
* Great concern for the honour of God's Name.
* Outspokenness against evil.
* Dependence on the Holy Spirit.
* Loyalty to God's Word.
* Of humility (by and large).
* Obvious gifts.

Things which were different in their ministries were:

* Their differing approach to the task.
* Their bearing.
* Their pulpit manner (contrast Murray McCheyne with Billy Sunday or W.P. Nicholson).
Their gifts. Their differing areas of service (John Mott amongst students and William Booth in the slums.

Some outstanding contributions can be found in:

* John Wesley's journals.
* Charles Wesley's hymns.
* George Whitfield's sermons.
* The saintly lives of David Brainerd, Murray McCheyne and Charles Simeon.
* Charles G. Finney's famous lectures on revival.
* The prayer power of Lionel B. Fletcher.
* Dr Torrey's, 'How to work for Christ'.
* D.L. Moody's books and sermons and the writings of Dr Wilbur Chapman bring great blessing.
* The life of John Mott and his effect in world outreach.
* Billy Graham's sermons and articles.
* Leighton Ford's "Christian Persuader".
* Dr Oswald Smith and Dr Edwin Orr's books, plus messages of various Billy Graham associates are worthy of serious study.

Charles Alexander used to say something like this, 'You say that you are following Jesus, are you fishing for men (as Jesus desires of you)? If you are not fishing, you are not following'. Charles Alexander was renowned as a great personnel worker.

To groups of men in Dundee, Scotland, in 1903 Mr Alexander said:

'Be a soul-winner if you are never anything else. You will find very few who want to shine in winning souls all the time. You have a chance here to distinguish yourselves ... The last thing the devil will let you do is to never miss a prayer meeting or a Sunday morning service, he will even let you get up and lecture on religious subjects, and do all sorts of religious deeds, if you will stop short of one thing, and that is to get face to face with individuals, to bring them to a decision for Jesus Christ and get them to confess Him openly before the world'.

"Great Personal Workers", by Faris D. Whitesell, Moody Press (pp. 78-79), show in Charles Alexander, Dr Chapman's fine singer what was a characteristic of the outstanding evangelists, that is, their commitment to the task of 'fishing for men'.

Another helpful book on evangelists is the paperback by Dr Fred Barlow called "Profiles in Evangelism", published by the Sword of the Lord Foundation, giving biographical sketches on world-renowned evangelists (46 in all) including some mentioned in this study, and other well known evangelists.

Then there are the Congress papers giving a mine of information by evangelists and world leaders in the Congresses in Berlin, South-East Asia and other regional areas. Lausanne and Amsterdam.

* Last and by no means least, no evangelist should go past a careful study of the great soul-winners of the New Testament.

* The spiritual preparation.
* The method of presenting the message.
* The power behind the message.
* Their use of Scripture.
* Their different approach with the same Gospel to Jews and the gentiles. For example, the sermon at Pentecost by Peter differs in approach from the sermon to the Greek philosophers at Mars Hill by the Apostle Paul.
* Their non-stereotyped way of approaching various people and groups. Notice how Jesus dealt with the woman of Samaria, and the woman taken in adultery and the self-righteous Pharisees.

You can have a great heart-warming time as you catch the fire, and love and passion of the outstanding. Pray over this study and ask God to make you like them, but better still, like the Master Evangelist, Jesus Christ our Lord.