1993

The making of an evangelist

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Point Halloran, Qld. : T.M. Pryce-Davies, 1993.
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This chapter has to do with bread-winners of both sexes and from all walks of life — but especially with professional bread-winners.

We will be dealing with those of high ranks in the community and those in the more lowly ranks.

Remember this great truth — this one basic law:

All humans are sinners at birth and need Christ's salvation. Later in life they may attain a high station in their profession but they will still be sinners in God's sight, and still need a Saviour. So regardless of rank or station, they will need to be shown how to come to the 'level ground' of Calvary where their position in life does not count. Only sinner take their place there, for Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that is the only qualification needed for salvation. This ground is the same for kings and peasants, the rich and the poor.

The areas of opportunity for witnessing

There is a field of great opportunity to influence our nation by seeking to reach non-Christian businesses, trade union leaders, professional people such as educators, political and social leaders. This area of opportunity for witnessing would also cover doctors, dentists, lawyers, judges, estate agents, civil servants, politicians of both government and opposition parties. There are also tradesmen, salesmen, business tycoons, owners of small businesses, leaders and employees in the entertainment world such as theatre, television, radio and similar areas.

Building a further list

To this list a survey of the white and yellow pages of the phone book (see also trade journals, political party headquarters, trade union leaders, business and commerce groups, etc.). You may also add to this list yourself.

Learning from others

A study of the methods used by service clubs (excluding the alcohol section) can be of help to show how to reach these types of people. Evangelists and some modern Christian books on outreach can give further ideas.

Build an effective prayer team

Before doing anything else, build up an effective prayer team both for planning, and during witnessing attempts.

Proverbs 3:5-6 says 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and do not lean on thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths'. This passage of Scripture, if followed out carefully, would save a planner from many a pitfall. So in an important
venture like 'Professional Group Evangelism', make sure you have adequate and regular prayer backing. Plan a program of prayer beforehand and work the program looking always to the Lord to guide and bless.

Ú Ú”•Your approach in giving the Gospel out to the gathering•œ

The meeting of whatever type should not be 'too churchy'. If it is, they may not come to the planned outreach meeting.

Both Jesus and Paul did outreach without the standard hymns, Bible readings and prayers. However, please note that Jesus and Paul had tremendously powerful personal prayer times in their daily devotions. You should also have the prayer backing of your team.

Keep strictly to whatever you advertise the meeting to be. For example, a men's dinner with an outstanding speaker (karate champion, Christian politician, scientist, Christian business leader, etc.). Don't get people under false pretences. Remember, the Spirit of God is the 'Spirit of Truth'. If you say it is not a church service, it should not be a church service.

However, the speaker should always give a testimony or message on the theme how Christ makes life easier and gives future hope. You could advertise this as 'an outstanding speaker with a message on real living.

The venue should be in a neutral location - usually away from the church or hall if possible. Non-church people feel less threatened in this way. Paul in Acts 17 sets a good example of reaching people where they are, and certainly not watering down the Gospel to suit the audience.

Even Christian ministers working in a circuit ministry have meet where they can. My ministry has taken me on wharves, in halls, guest houses, and wherever and whatever was available at times. God blesses in the streets or wherever. For the great work of God for our salvation, through Christ and His Cross, Christ was not crucified in a cathedral-type building, between two candles. But he died on a cross between two thieves, and His work on the Cross was in the midst of cursing, non-sympathetic, hostile people - some even gambled for His clothes.

We need to know, in soul winning, that sometimes we can be more particular that the Holy Spirit, who is ready to work anywhere and it's the place of God's appointment.

As the reader will probably know that God uses some very strange messengers of mercy to answer desperate prayers, I once had a very unusual answer to prayer when I was astride a motor bike at a petrol bowser. I kick-started the bike which had been filled with petrol a few moments before. The bike burst into flames and there seemed to be nothing on hand to put it out. A prayer went to God to help, for the matter was urgent as petrol was being put in vehicles around about. God sent a man with a blanket to put over the flames to put them out. That man was drunk and staggering as he came but he was God's messenger for that day - God's answer to my urgent prayer.

The heart of the messenger with the Gospel should be right. God's answer to our prayers show how wonderfully He can work with the messenger who is available to God at the moment of need.
Advertising

This should be done with first-class printing, very legible and very clear as to venue, date, and all vital information.

If it is to keep fairly neutral, whilst letting people know who is doing the inviting, it is usually better not to stress denomination or be too Christian in character. To do this, it will alienate some of those you want to reach but the advertising must be truthful and should feature the speaker in such a way that is acceptable. One of the people I led to Christ was a famous TV personality, and she referred to her conversion as a major corner in her life. So the speaker advertising could read, 'Former TV personality turns the major corner in life (a message on daily living).

The invitation should be specially designed and personalised so as to make the receiver feel that they will be very welcome at the function.

Dress

This should be a well-dressed or dressy-casual meeting because of the types of people who are being invited. Those you seek to influence under this chapter heading, usually will be well-dressed people, and expect this kind of function.

The message

This should not be compromised or watered-down. In Acts 17, Paul, when speaking to the philosophers on Mars Hill, knew that most of them did not believe in a resurrection of the body, and in their philosophy, didn't want to know about it. Paul preached on the resurrection because it was an historical fact and he had no intention of watering-down the Gospel to suit the audience. The result - the Holy Spirit worked that day and there was lasting blessings. The types of messages may be varied. Lay people and people who have been out in the real world, but the Gospel must be unchanged, although its presentation can be varied.

There should be a clear statement made that the function is not being used to raise money. There is nothing to buy or join, nor is money to be asked for some cause. The costs could be shared by those inviting or by some sponsorship.

Other steps which may be taken

You may need to build bridges of friendship by inviting to picnics or fishing trips or going to other things they are interested in, without compromising your Christian witness.

Try to use those of the same profession to make contacts or to come with you on the bridge-building meetings. For example, a Christian lawyer to help influence a non-Christian lawyer; a Christian businessman to help influence a non-Christian businessman.

Alternatively, these professionals mentioned could be encouraged to build bridges themselves.

A Christian lawyer can seek to reach clients by giving a New Testament (like the Gideon type of New Testament with a 'where to find' help
A Christian businessman can influence people not only with the Bible on the desk approach, or the New Testament in the pocket, but in the honesty and integrity of his business dealings.

In the waiting room of a business or a doctor's surgery a special take-away Christian tract display can be featured. Subjects covered could include worry; future life; world prophecy, etc.

The Christian salesman will find opportunities with customers; in travel areas (transportation, hotel, motels); personal friends; at work place - seek to work among fellow employees.

Our witness must bear out what we say by our godly life if we are to make any impact for Christ.

To leave Christian tracts with the salesman's address on it is another way of sowing the seed. Perhaps one written by the salesman telling his own conversion story could be widely used.

Salesmen and Christian witnesses often have to use somewhat similar techniques, and so it should be relatively easy for the salesman to witness.

Some special things to note

Whatever you do, here are some things that need to be noted:

* Invitation through the mail are best.
* Neutral location. Keep venue from being churchy.
* No formal denominational or Christian sponsorship.
* It is not necessary to have alcoholic drinks. Use other types of substitutes. There is no need to apologise for the absence of booze.
* Make sure the invited guests meet other well-dressed leaders.
* The speaker should be a lay person, converted as an adult - making it easy for guests to identify. Remember, don't isolate your guests by placing unnecessary barriers at the start of the meeting. * Make sure there is no hidden agenda. For example, fund-raising or nothing to buy. Let the guests know it is your loving concern that is the motivation of the organisers.

Trust God's spirit to overcome any difficulties. I would like to pay tribute to some thoughts expressed on 'Reaching Business and Political Leaders' - a paper given at a seminar by Mrs Nancy DeVos, at the International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists, held in Amsterdam on July 18, 1983 at 12:30 pm ... 'If politicians are invited please note that your approach should definitely be non-political'.

As you read these lines above, pray that God will give you ideas beyond these 'thought starters' and that He will enthuse you to reach some of these people mentioned who are often unreached with the Gospel.