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The making of an evangelist

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The Gospel in the gutter centres especially around the use of the 'Kerbside Sunday School Technique'. It has also been mentioned in another part of this book, in the framework of church outreach. This section is more on the 'how to do it' plan of attack.

The venue and aims

In my personal use of this technique, the venue is largely determined by what aims we have for the Kerbside Sunday School. My aim has mostly been to reach the unreached children of the district with the Gospel, with the further aim to then get them into a Sunday school connected with the church. A by-product of these two aims is that the church Sunday school is also built up.

In one place, I used this method because our Sunday school was really down in numbers. It increased greatly - from about 3-6 up to about 130 children.

The venue should not be too far from the regular Sunday school and should be in a quiet place. For example, a street which is a cul-de-sac and is near a children's park or playground or some other place where the children gather. We were always very careful regarding the team members who invited the children to the Sunday school in the gutter.

Usually we used women members of the team, so that if any mothers were present, they would not be as concerned as if a strange man invited the children.

Regarding the gutter, we always chose a place with a built up footpath for the children to sit on, and the gutter was always one which was very dry and clean. We chose about eight strategic sites and moved on after some weeks from one to another. This is very important!

Permission obtained

It is usually essential to go to the police station to get permission for the site(s) so that the children are not in danger on a busy road, or so that we are not breaking any law. Most times it is very easy to obtain the permits if the police know clearly which streets you are going to. You may need to enclose a photocopy of the area marked with crosses or dots showing where you wish to hold your meetings. Talk to your local police and explain your aims. Don't forget to get positions in very quiet streets with little or no traffic. The police will guide you in this.

The team

The team should be made up of both Christian men and women. The men should get the gear in position and everything ready for the Sunday school. The ladies should go to homes in the vicinity, knock on doors and ask permission to take the children to the Sunday school. The children should come just as they are. There is no need to dress up.

It is important to have an identification badge or card from the church so that parents will entrust their children to your team.
A plan should be worked out as to the time to get there before the meeting starts, so as to allow the children to be brought down in time to start. If the Sunday school starts at a regular time, say 2.30 pm, then the team should be there at 2.00 pm at the latest.

The team should be divided as follows:

• The men— take the equipment and set up everything. They ensure that the area is clean, and erect a small sign explaining what the meeting is.

• The ladies— should be divided into two groups. The “teaching group” goes straight to the site with the men and help get the teaching materials ready. The “visiting group” should go straight to the playground, park and/or homes. This will depend on where the most children can be contacted. Common sense will determine what is best for your situation.

“Equipment”

We have used this in two ways in our conducting of the Gospel in the 'Gutter Sunday School'. First of all, we carried whatever was portable to the site and sit it up there. Later, we made a little hand-cart, already set up with a blackboard on one side and a flannel-graph board on the other. The board should be able to take drawing pins and paper sheets. Whatever kind of equipment you take, remember that you may have to contend with strong breezes and will need it to be firmly anchored. The hand-cart could be fitted to the back of a bicycle and towed along.

“Scripture used”

We had a mixed audience of protestants and Catholics and "don't-go-anywhereians" and so we used small Bible portions from the Bible Society in both the protestant and Catholic versions.

We would select a Gospel text and the Bible portions were distributed according to the protestant and Catholic backgrounds. Then we would get both groups to read the text and give a message centring around the text. This helped the two groups to see that the Word of God used that day was the same from both Bibles. For example, if we took a text like 1 John 5:12, if it was the same in both Bibles, we could give a message from that passage.

He who has the Son = He who has Jesus as Saviour;
Has life = Verse 11 shows us it is eternal life;
The word 'has' = We've got it now and also in the future.

He who does not have the Son = Does not have Jesus in his heart;
Does not have life = He is lost and does not have eternal life;
The words 'does not have' = right now, he does not have it.

Of course we used visual aids to help get the message over to the children. Even that is not enough unless it has been prayed over and prayed through.

We always had a prayer time before we went out to witness, asking God to give us children to teach and to help them really understand.
In addition, we used to have incentive tokens such as the Sunday school cards with texts for them to learn and keep for themselves. When they had six, we gave them a bigger one, or a little New Testament to keep for themselves.

One of the districts we worked in was a heavily Roman Catholic area, and some discouragers reminded me of this fact. However, in my young enthusiasm, I replied, 'I know it is, but what kind of an area did Martin Luther have when he set out to witness for Christ'. I have since found out that although I was no Martin Luther, yet a strong belief that God could work 'in spite of', was justified by results that followed.

We had some information given us that the Roman Catholic church nearby, was quite concerned because of the effects made in the lives of some children.

Ú Ú”“Change of venue•œ

After some weeks in that area, we told the children and parents we had contacted what we intended to do, and said their needs in this way can be catered for by the regular Sunday school up at the church, and that the Sunday school is open to all denominations.

If their children enjoyed the Kerbside meetings, they would also enjoy the others because they are conducted in the same manner. Offer to take the children up to the main Sunday school and introduce them to the Superintendent and pupils.

Ú Ú”“Music in Kerbside Sunday School•œ

The music is a little more difficult outside than in the regular church Sunday school. Choruses are probably better than most types of music, because these can be printed out on cardboard or cloth materials for more permanent use.

Instruments which are probably best are guitars, accordions, mouth-organs, or just led by a good singer without any instrument. If you don't have someone at your church with any of these musical talents who is available to help with the 'Kerbside Sunday School', see if someone can be spared from another bigger church to help. A little careful and prayerful thought will help you build up a fairly regular team of teachers, visitation scouts, helpers, musicians and if possible, a lightning sketch artist could be very useful in the teaching and music sections.

One other area of the Gospel in the gutter outreach is general open-air evangelism work which is covered later in the book.