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The making of an evangelist

Jarrott, Reginald Edward

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Evangelistic preaching is somewhat different from general preaching as it usually has to start with completely different aims. Often it is used before congregations or groups totally ignorant of the Gospel or of man’s place in God’s scheme of things.

It becomes essential to note some very important 'basics' essential to fruitful preaching of the gospel.

The basics are:

* The preparation of the man.
* The preparation of the message.
* The persuading of the people.
* The preaching for a verdict.
* The prosecution of the appeal.
* The persuasion and follow-up.
* The practice of alliteration.

Let us have a look at these a little more.

**The preparation of the man:**

Because an evangelist is not a self-made person but a God-made person, it is essential to study carefully his spiritual preparation.

There is first of all his character. This is found in passages of Scripture such as Matthew 4:19 (Lit.) 'Come here after me and I will make you to become fishers of men' (NASV 1964).

In Ephesians 4:11 we read of the work of the evangelist and his place in the church scheme of things. '... and some evangelists ... for the equipping of the saints for their work of the ministry [of service] for the building up of the Body of Christ'. So the evangelist’s character is two-fold:

(a) Fishers of men.
(b) Preparing others to be fishers of men.

These workers have been set out by the Spirit of God, in the plan of God, for the work of God. These are the bases of our charter. After his charter comes the evangelist’s commission.

Besides the Great Commission found in the Gospels, a statement of Jeremiah 1:5-8 is also applicable, and very comforting, regarding the commission to evangelise. In that passage, God says to Jeremiah (and I believe to evangelists), 'I formed thee ... I know thee ... I sanctified thee [that is, set you apart] ... I command thee ... I shall be with thee'.

M. Bounds made a statement some years ago, which seems to sum it up in some measure. The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men.
After the charter and the commission there must come "The Constant Aim. For God's glory - and remember that all the evangelist is, or can be, is a voice for God. Jesus reminds us of something which should do away with all spiritual pride when He said, 'Without me ye can do nothing'. That is, not a solitary thing.

The preacher's constant aim should be to give an authentic word from God each time he preaches. An authentic word does not necessarily mean the Scriptures as such, but a word, a message, which God will own as His. Campbell Morgan has to decide whether to be a preacher or a messenger. God made him both.

Do not study to be a fine preacher, so much as to be a good messenger, who looks to Jesus for preaching food. 'Jerichos' are often blown down by rain storms.

The preacher's constant aim also should be to be anointed for service. Therefore, ask Jesus to

* make you become a fisher of men
* teach your hands to war
* anoint you with the Spirit so that with Jesus you may truly say, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me' (Isaiah 61).

Billy Sunday used to have Isaiah 61 open before him in the pulpit every time he gave a Gospel message. It was, and is, a good reminder and it was what Jesus said of Himself.

Anointing should be upon the preacher and his message - that God given mysterious something. It may be hard to define what it is, but the people know what it is not. This is the anointing which makes a sermon a vibrant and effective message, and the preacher a God-sent messenger.

Too, the aim of the preacher should be to be courageous. Wesley said that preachers who fear nothing but sin and deserve nothing but God, will shake the gates of hell and set up God's kingdom on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer. The preaching must have the aim of spiritual vitality.

It must come from a personal God, and must reach every area of the person - the evangelist. It must reach his head, his heart, conscience and well, before he dares to try to reach other in those areas too. Preaching must be to the whole man, with a God-given spiritual vitality. It has been said of Billy Graham, by someone, that he speaks like a man who know what he is here for and where he is going, and in a world which has lost its way, thousands are ready to listen to a man who says he know the way out ... and they do listen! Apart from his virtues of sincerity, humility and authority and his unquenchable faith in Christ, like Samson of old his strength cannot be explained apart from a compact with God. You see, 'Little is much when God is in it'.

After C.G. Finney had experienced a hard and somewhat hostile meeting, he and a deacon went out into a quite grove to spend the whole afternoon in prayer. That evening they felt in their being the assurance of victory. When they went to the church the meeting place was packed, and when the service was on, the Spirit of God came in like a battering rain
on the congregation. General conviction spread and great results followed.

A further very important aim for the evangelistic preacher is to have spiritual passion and fire. Someone has said 'the symbol of the Holy Spirit is a 'tongue of fire' not a 'block of ice'. Fire brings light; warmth; sets ablaze many a heart; burns the dross. False fire comes from emotionalism - fire uncontrolled like a bush fire or, being temporary, like a bonfire. Real, focussed, white-hot fire, which cuts through the steel of the heart, come from God above.

Billy Sunday once said, 'One spark of fire can do more to prove the power of (gun) powder than a whole library written on the subject'.

Martin Luther (speaking on the power of prayer) said, 'My prayer is more than the devil himself. To neglect prayer for one day means the loss of the fire of faith'.

Many famous and fruitful evangelists spent morning and/or afternoon hours in prayer, when nobody could keep them from God in prayer and Bible reading. They always had time for God.

There are a number of other facets in the diamond of the evangelists' aim, in order to make him valuable in God's sight as a messenger of the Lord.

I list them together for your consideration, with a small comment later. They are:

* A passion for souls. Nothing but the salvation of souls could make David Braidwood happy.

* Holiness. The saintly Robert Murray McCheyne got texts, thoughts, words from God in prayer.

* Seeking out the lost. Need to stop playing with religion and do something to bring the world to Christ.

* Live for God alone. Billy Sunday said, 'I owe God everything; I owe the devil nothing except the best fight I can put up. I am in favour of anything the devil is against and I am against everything the devil is in favour of ...'.

* The joy of the Lord. Our bearing an in-built happiness will help our message no end. Peace and joy in the pulpit creates longing in the pew.

Remember the man must be prepared by God if he is to be effective for God. In the New American Standard Version, 1 Peter 4:11 reads, 'Whosoever speaks, let him speak as it were, the utterances of God; whosoever serves let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belong the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen'. So the evangelist should pray along these line.

Someone has prayed along these lines:

'Lord Jesus be continually everything to me, my life, my victory, my wisdom, my joy, my strength, my everything. Help me to be dependent on
thee, walking in thy ways, and in thy strength.
Make me willing to follow thee and be 'bent' and 'broken' and 'trust' in
the redeeming Blood for complete victory'.

Ú Ú""The preparation of a sermon

It is essential in evangelistic preaching to think about the needs of
the people, the things that 'hurt' or trouble them, and seek to meet
that need by the preaching of the Word.

1. We need to work out the type of message suitable to the occasion.

   (a) We need to work out the basic needs of mankind.
   (b) The special needs of any given area.
   (c) We must present Christ to them as the one adequate to
   meet the needs.
   (d) The cross is all important. It is central to the
   message of peoples needs.
   (e) To seek the special guidance of the Holy Spirit as to
   what we need to say.
   (f) We need to bring a message which aims for a response -
   which asks 'What are you going to do about it?'

2. To whom we are bringing the message.

To communicate it is essential to try to gauge the type of congregation.
For example, age, sexes, background, nationality, are they sinners
(unsaved), saints, backsliders, those needing to take some further step
of dedication for Christian growth, and/or Christian service.

A cardinal error is to isolate the congregation. Dr Billy Graham never
commits this error. He always seeks to bring all the congregation in to
the place where the message is relevant. For example, 'I am going to
ask you, up there in the choir, young, old, men, women, everyone, to get
out of your seats'. He preaches to them all. If he speaks on
loneliness it is the general loneliness experienced by all. Not some
special specific kind of loneliness experienced by very few, so that the
message is not relevant to the needs of the whole congregation.

For example, on e preacher I know preaching with very little result,
committed the error of isolating the congregation by narrowing his topic
too much.

He preached on the theme - 'The loneliness some married women suffer
when neglected by their husbands'. So he effectively sent away the
single women, the widows, the men, the unmarried lads, the grannies and
grandpas.

We should preach a message which is like the buckshot of a short-gun.
It sprays the crowd, and not like the sniper who singles out a
particular person or two.

3. How do we preach an evangelistic message then?

First of all we need to get our messages from God, who know the
congregation's deep needs better than we do. So spend a lot of time in
prayerful preparation. We need to say it with directness. For example,
the message is for you. Not for your friends only, but you. It was you who has sinned, it is you who need a Saviour. Christ died for you so you need Christ.

If we take a theme, 'God loves everybody (including you)'.

(a) In the world
(b) Everywhere
(c) Us.

Make sure that we don't give an essay instead of a message, a direct message. In speaking about the world, you can tell them about the needs of all kinds of people, and nations but make sure you bring it in to say - you are part of the world.

If you don't bring these in to allow the Spirit of God to push the point home, you will have nothing to appeal on because you have again isolated your congregation. You must say God loves the world, "and that means you too".

If, for instance, you talk about alcoholics, prostitutes and the like, needing God, you are preaching only to the 'so called' down andouters and the congregation may not have any of them in it. You also need to preach to the up-and-outers. That is, the people who are considered morally upright but have other sins which also need cleansing.

These may be quite adequate, they feel without God. They are seated on the throne of the heart, the place where God is entitled to preside. This sin of self-sufficiency is a deadly and dangerous one, and needs radical treatment. We need to address it with some directness.

* We need to give the message with simplicity. Don't be a preacher like the old man who was chided by an old lady. Jesus said, 'feed my sheep' - not my giraffes.

Billy Sunday wanted to preach the gospel plainly so that people who came to listen did not have to bring along a dictionary.

* We need to preach with urgency. An American friend of mine used to say, 'Men will live as long as God lives - either in heaven or in hell'.

* We need to preach a correct doctrine. In Ecclesiastes 12:9-10 we are reminded, 'And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge ... yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words and that which was written was upright, even words of truth'.

Remember, God's Word is far more important than man's word.

* People have a need whoever they are.
* It is very dangerous to neglect that need.
* They need introducing to Christ.
* Try to get them to let Christ meet their needs.
* Seek to get them by follow-up to the witnesses of the fact.
We need the Spirit's empowering for effective preaching. The Spirit needs to be in the sermon from start to finish - from the thoughts and preparation, through the delivery to the conclusion and appeal.

The evangelistic preaching should centre around the saving work of Christ and His ability to save a person right through. When Jesus saves a person, He saves them from start to finish and in every area of life.

4. How do we persuade the people with effect?

I have found by using John Wesley's strategy that lives can be truly affected for Christ. When Wesley first went to a place he preached the law in the strongest, the closest, the most searching manner possible. Only as people became convinced of sin did he mix more of the good news - to raise to spiritual life those whom the law had slain.

In my evangelistic work, I have often preached most of the sermon on the need to repent, and poured in the oil of healing, with very lasting results.

On the other hand, D.L. Moody once preached to a congregation with little effect it seemed. He was suddenly called away and a man called 'The Boy Preacher', because of his youthful appearance, preached on the love of God, till people fell in love with Christ in a way that Moody's preaching had not done.

Usually we have to create the need before people will want to come either by showing the sinfulness of man, or by showing the sheer beauty of the Saviour. (I preached on the majesty and beauty of Christ, and his place in men's hearts, and out of 700 High School children, about 200 responded to that one sermon.)

The late Dr Martin Lloyd Jones said, 'It is because the law is not preached that we have so much superficial evangelism ... by the holiness of God, by His demands, and also by the consequences of sin'.

Our approach may depend on the background of the people to whom we minister in some cases. The Pharisees received condemnation but some way-out sinners were welcomed with no word of condemnation.

5. The matter of preaching for a verdict.

The aim of the fisherman is the catch fish. We do not cast the line or the net just to wet it.

The aim of evangelistic preaching is to get a verdict. To this end, the whole sermon should move to a conclusion in such a way so that the preacher may say at the end, 'Now is the time to choose'.

He should say something like this: 'You must recognise your need. Renounce your sin. Receive Christ as Saviour and Lord'.

Or something like this: 'Admit you are a sinner. Believe Christ is able to save (and is willing). Count the cost of making Him Saviour and Lord plus the cost of not making Him Saviour and Lord. Entrust yourself to Him. Let Him in to save and take charge of you.

5. The prosecution of the appeal.
Although there are a variety of legitimate ways of making an appeal, dishonest ways, trickery, or shallowness should be avoided like the plague.

(a) The invitation to come forward at the close:

(i) with minister standing there to greet them.
(ii) or with other Christians, or counsellors standing in the front to encourage the person making the decision.

Note: The distance between seats, sometimes can make it practically impossible for people to come out, so just get them to stand or raise hands while the congregation is seated.

(b) The 'after service'. Ask those who feel a need to remain behind for further help.

The counselling room method. Ask those who have a need to go into the nearby counselling room, where a counsellor will meet them to help.

Other methods used:

(i) Those who have received Christ recently are asked to stand, and other under conviction are asked to stand with them.
(ii) Some churches distribute, or have in the pews, a printed decision card which seekers are asked to fill in. A moment of quiet for the cards to be filled in, and people are invited to stay behind or go to the counselling room after the service concludes.
(iii) In youth groups around a camp-fire, I have used the following method. If you are deciding for Christ, put a stick in the fire and we will see and give help.
(iv) In home coffee meetings, I invite people to pray a prayer if they have a need for salvation or dedication of life afresh.

I explain that I do this because I wouldn't like anyone to go away with a spiritually hungry heart. Then I get the whole group to bow in prayer as people are asked to pray for salvation or re-dedication. I then say if they have prayed the prayer, I would like to give them some free literature to help them, and would like them to raise their hand if they seek spiritual help, and I would see them after at their convenience.

Sometimes in church services, if I think it is wise because of some mitigating circumstance (for example, cripples, or mothers with babies and other children), I ask the congregation to pray for others and then invite people to pray either of the two prayers above. After asking the pastor, or some other person appointed to watch, I ask them to raise their hand if they prayed either of the prayers. I then invite them to put down their hand and come to the front of the church after the service is ended, where they will be met by someone to give and explain some free Christian literature.

There are many other ways, but the above seem to me to be the most suitable.
Every appeal should be an honest appeal. No tricks or 'come along tactics'. People should never feel that they have been caught or trapped.

Make the appeal with courtesy, urgency, sincerity and conviction. Don't be tentative, but let it be a definite heartfelt appeal seeking to call with the kindness and love of Jesus.

6. Those persuaded and the follow-up.

Just as the new-born baby cannot feed on a T-Bone steak, neither can the new Christian take the strong meat of the Word.

These new Christians have been brought to birth, now they need much tender care. They will need:

* The milk of the Word to grow on.
* Prayer to breathe in Heaven's air.
* Friends to follow up and help.
* Encouragement to help them win others.

An old evangelist friend used to say, 'They need to be well born'.

They need to burn their bridges behind them; grow in grace and be filled with the Spirit.

Let us not fail them in these critical first days. Introduce them to Christians. Sit with them in church if convenient. See they have a place to grow strong in - but don't be over-zealous or over-bearing.

Notes on preaching through an interpreter:

1. Much prayer for self and interpreter.
2. Half length sermon to allow interpreter time for his translation.
3. Short sentences.
4. Simple English words.
5. Avoid slang, colloquialisms (interpreter may not have a corresponding word).
6. Speak more slowly, in short bursts.
7. An appeal can be successful.

If you were to draft out a week's preaching in a crusade going from one Sunday to the next; a suggested program would be along the following lines.

The basis of preaching evangelically is to find out:

(a) the group of people to whom you will be speaking.
(b) the general needs of the audience.

If you had a few opportunities to speak to an adult Bible class and to especially focus on strengthening their faith, you could choose subjects like depending on how many times you had to speak.

(a) The Bible is true.
(b) The Bible and how to use it.
(c) The Bible and effective prayer.
(d) The Bible and prophecy.
In a number of meetings with the theme “Living with Direction in a Confused World”, taking in a series of services for eight days – Sunday to Sunday.

• Sunday morning service – “The Face Behind the Picture”

1. Satan is behind the picture in many of the world's scenes.
2. You can try to dislodge him, and fail.
3. Only Christ can do it.
4. Christ is invisible yet real. He matches Satan easily.
5. Only Christ can give victory.

• Sunday evening service – “Master Plan for Living”

1. A plan of salvation.
2. A plan of service.
3. A plan of spiritual growth.

• Monday Men's Dinner – “Where in the World are we Going?”

1. The world is in a mess.
2. Many people are scared and bewildered.
3. Man's remedies, though brilliant, have failed.
4. Christ knows the end from the beginning.
5. Turn to Christ for salvation and security.

• Tuesday morning ladies luncheon – “The Cure for the World.”
(Bible reading: Philippians 4:6,7,13,29; 2 Timothy 1:7.)

1. Worry - the curse.
2. Worry - the catastrophe.
3. Worry - the cause.
4. Worry - the cure.

• Tuesday evening home meeting – “Three Areas of Happiness”
(Psalm 23)

Verses 1-3 - A happy life.
Verses 4-5 - A happy death.
Verse 6 - A happy eternity.

• Wednesday morning evangelistic coffee morning – “Other Little Ships” (Mark 4:30-41)

1. The story of the disciples.
2. 'Peace' was asleep in their midst.
3. There were other little ships (troubled by the storm).
4. At least four kinds on the lake that day.
   (a) Lost ones - in danger of sin king.
   (b) Distressed ones - not knowing whom to turn to.
   (c) Following ships - following disciples and Jesus.
   (d) Ships that pass in the night - there for the one time with Jesus and His disciples. One chance only to experience His power.
• Wednesday evening, message mainly to the church people - "The Four Questions".

A Christian leader went to a mission field where they had had a revival. When he arrived there, he was met by a number of Christians whose lives had been altered by the revival. Although he was a recognised leader of great standing in his own country, they asked him three questions.

1. Are you saved? (1 John 5:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 1:2).
2. When were you saved and how? (Acts 9:1-9; 2 Timothy 1:5-7).

Two years later they asked him a fourth question.


• Thursday morning, High School assembly - "Jesus - The Hinge of History".

Both the temporal and the eternal worlds doors swing on Jesus Christ. No one else can make that claim in any field whatsoever.

• Jesus is unique (unique means He stands alone. The only one of His kind on earth).

Unique in His - Birth
- Life
- Teaching
- Authority
- Death
- Resurrection

• Jesus is wonderful. His name shall be called wonderful (Isaiah 9:6).

In the realm of - the intellectual (prophecies which concern Him (Psalm 22; Psalm 33(?).
- the inner life.
- the instructional.
- the international

Conclusion: Does your life swing on Christ?

• Thursday evening, home or church meeting - "The Day God Wrote a Word".

The word is personal, confidential and it concerns you. Your eternal future will depend on what God wrote.

1. A word of law on stone (Exodus 20).
   (a) The holiness of God.
   (b) The horror of the people.
   (c) The heavenly command.

2. A word of judgment on plaster (Daniel 5).
(a) The disobedience of Belshazzar (took holy things).
(b) The decision of God (wrote on plaster).
(c) The death of Belshazzar.

3. The word of forgiveness on sand (John 8).
   (a) The accusation.
   (b) The accusers.
   (c) The action of Christ.

4. A word of love in blood on wood (Romans 5).
   (a) The sinners around the cross.
   (b) The saviour on the cross.
   (c) The salvation brought nigh to God.

5. A word of victory in the skies (Revelation 19:11-16).
   (a) The conqueror (leads to war).
   (b) The companions (those who belong - the Christians).
   (c) The climax (the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of the Lord and His Christ).

Conclusion: we need to read what God says. Repent of our sins.
Rely on what Christ has done for salvation.

• Friday morning, evangelistic coffee meeting for ladies, retired men or shift-workers – Ó The Light of Fadeless Day • (John 14:1-6).

Heaven has been called many names. The city of light. The City of God. Zion Hill. The land of rest.

1. Don't fear (John 14:1).
2. Heavens near (John 14:2).
3. I'll appear (John 14:3).
4. The way is clear (John 14:4-5).
5. The answer is here (John 14:6).

• Friday evening, family night. Special musical program - I want to be a Christian (1 Thessalonians 1 or 1 John 1 or Luke 15:4).

Some people want to be a Christian. Some people don't want to be a Christian. They make excuses instead.

1. The excuses they make.
2. Anyway, what is a Christian?
3. Who is a Christian?
4. Who can be a Christian?
5. Are you a Christian?

Conclusion: What is your reaction to all this?

• Saturday evening, youth program – Ó The Grey Blob World .œ

This world seems out of control ... immense problems ... with little purpose and no direction.
To many, this world is a frightening, hopeless, unclean place in which millions live in utter despair. It is one grey blob, where nothing is distinct.

1. This really is a grey blob world to many.
   (a) People ask, 'Who am I? Why am I here?', and the philosopher said that many people are like a blind man, going out at midnight, searching in the heart of a dark forest, looking for a black cat, with the light gone out.
   (b) They hope to find identity and meaning through the world of:

Drugs
Illicit sex
Drop-out of society
Rebellion
Satanic cults
The material
Alcohol.

These leave them groping in dark shadows of the grey blob world. What they need is less darkness and more light. They need:

2. The real world where the sunshine of Christ's love and salvation break through.
   (a) They need to open up their hearts to let the sunshine in (the Saviour).
   (b) Jesus said, '... come unto me all ye who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest'.
   (c) Become a rebel against evil and a destroyer of darkness by shining for Christ.

3. Where do you live at this moment?
   (a) In the fog, or in the sunshine.
   (b) Under satanic deception and darkness or on the narrow road to life and light?

You know, you die where you live. Live in darkness - die in darkness. Live in light - die in eternal light.

• Second Sunday, close of meetings. Morning service, "The Return of Christ"
  1. He will come again.
  2. How He will come again.
  3. Why He will come again.
  4. When He will come again.
  5. What will happen when He comes again?

Are you ready for his return?

• Evening service - "The High Cost of Saying No!"

Some people count the cost of becoming a Christian and rightly so. But many fail to count the cost of not becoming a Christian. So it is important to:
1. Count the cost of not being a Christian.
   (a) The sacrifices we make here and now.
   (b) The sacrifices we will make in the future.
   (c) The sacrifices we make by not having eternal life.

2. Having counted the cost of not being a Christian, it is wise then to:
   (a) Turn from our old sinful life.
   (b) Forsake our wrong-doing.
   (c) Turn to Christ in faith.
   (d) Accept Him as Saviour.
   (e) Live for Him as Lord.
   (f) Obey Him.

Conclusion: In this debate, voting is compulsory. Whom do you vote for? Remember Jesus said, in Matthew 12:30, 'He that is not for me is against me and he who does not gather with me shall be scattered abroad'.

* Some other subjects worth thinking about:
  * The wages of sin (Galatians 6:1).
  * The Lamb of God (Isaiah 53:6).
  * The meaning of the resurrection (Acts 17:31).
  * Four powerful reactions (Mark 4:1-20).
  * The fate of the men in Ezekiel 33:7-20.
  * The power of the living Christ (Galatians 2:20).
  * A Spirit-led life (1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Galatians 5:19-26).
  * The voice of God (Exodus 20).
  * The guilt and power of sin (Romans 8:8).
  * Repentance, the forgotten word (Matthew 4:17).