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The making of an evangelist

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The word means, according to one of my dictionaries, among other things, a dish of different kinds of meat and vegetables cooked together; hence a miscellaneous collection; a medley. In another dictionary the basic meaning is similar by slightly different. It gives the meaning as a mixture of rose petals, spices, etc., and/or musical, or literary medley.

Key words of these two definitions seem to be 'a mixture' of different ingredients; a miscellaneous collection; a medley. That is what this chapter is all about - it is a mixture of ideas - a miscellaneous collection of hints and help.

To start with, I present a precis of the various sections of the book "The Making of an Evangelist" in its two parts. In short - a pot pourri.

Part one shows how God works through a life for His own purposes in order to get a person to the place of His appointment. This section was written to answer the question that I have been asked by young men, 'How do I know whether I am an evangelist and being called to that work?'. That question is answered in two ways.

1. Sometimes through a puzzling sequence of events. God gradually reveals His will by what people say; what events teach us; what God shows our hearts and minds as we study the Word of God.

2. God usually confirms His call by the statements of others. That is, if we are feeling called to evangelism, others may see our gift and tell us before we know it ourselves. This is a very important aspect of the guidance of God. However, the more we pray about these observations and the response of our hearts, our pathway will be more clear, as will the witness of the Spirit in our hearts. It took quite a few people to convince me that I did indeed have the evangelistic gift (see Ephesians 4:11-12). God sometimes gives us the dual gifts of pastor and later evangelist. It was so with me.

Past two of this book has sections A-E inclusive and covers a number of aspects of evangelism.

• Section A - The Philosophy of Evangelism is written to seek answers to questions such as, 'Why should we evangelise at all?'. In a church where I was a pastor seeking to do the work of an evangelist, and always trying to encourage the church to grow, a 'pillar of the church' (a lady) asked a very strange question. The question was, 'Why does the pastor want to get other people into our fellowship of our church, we have plenty of people already?'.

This section deals with the ministry of an evangelist. The passion for souls needed by himself and the church. It brings us back to the basics of New Testament evangelists, showing up the difference between the true and the false evangelists.

• Section B - The Purpose of Evangelism is an extension of Section A. It tells why people outside the Christian church need, desperately need, the evangelist and his Gospel message.
Section C - The Practice of Evangelism is a section in which can be found hints on outreach to the unsaved. It could be useful to at least three groups.

1. Evangelists.
2. Pastors who wish to do the work of an evangelist.
3. Church people who wish to reach out into the harvest field of the world.

The section covers many aspects of evangelism and gives practical ideas for those wishing to evangelise the lost masses of mankind.

Section D - The Perimeters of Evangelism seeks to give the three groups in A,B,C above, the boundaries for consideration. It also seeks to promote a world vision, while still maintaining a local vision. If we have a real Biblical idea of a world vision, it must, of necessity, touch our own small corner of this world. If we have only a local vision, then many areas of the world will remain untouched.

The section also attempts to show areas within the boundaries mentioned so that an in-depth study will be entered into.

Section E - The Future Prospect of Evangelism raises the question that because of the rapid expansion of new techniques, and the increase in evil in this world, will evangelism, with some horse and buggy methods, be ineffective in the future? If some methods are considered 'horse and buggy' methods by some people, then there seems to be two things we can do.

1. Revise the 'horse and buggy' methods.
2. Study new methods by first finding what is really hurting the people, then seeking the most effective method of healing the hurt of the people.

It depends on how you look at the world scene. Are Satan and his followers an unbeatable army, with a strategy better than God's? Or is God quite adequate to knock down walls, and trample Satan and his hosts?

Don't ever forget that the Lord Jesus Christ said, 'I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not [repeat, not] prevail against it'. The Gospel we preach shall, in the end, prevail (see Matthew 16:18).

We need to remember that although we live in the jet and rocket age, powers and values are always the same - eternal and almighty. Matthew 16:18 makes that quite clear. circumstances and opposition to the Gospel do not phase God. They are just conditions to be overcome in His good time.

What will seem a possible weakness by some reading this book, is the fact that there is no bibliography of the latest books on evangelism. Years ago, I had such a list compiled by a librarian, belonging to a world-class organisation. Today, a lot of it is out of date, and some of the books would not capture the attention or interest of some evangelists or other Christians because, to use a rather slang expression, the subjects are not their 'cup of tea'.
I read, or heard, a most interesting statement a little time back. I do not know who said it, but it certainly is true. It was, 'If you marry this generation, you will be a widow in the next generation'. In my lecture notes given across the years, and on my personal library shelves, are books with statements which were the 'in thing' a few years ago but now need revising, or certainly need some lateral thinking on them.

I have a fairly large list of methods which were very effective in their day, but because of the change of circumstances, and the altering of city laws because of increased traffic, or a changing approach in communicating to people, they are not useful at the moment, and they need not be accepted as absolute. However, with a little rethinking and some lateral thinking they can still be used effectively in some circumstances.

One example is flannelette as a background, with cut-out pictures backed with flannelette so that the pictures will stick to the background which sometimes had a scene painted on it. For a large extent, this has been superseded by the overhead projector, but not entirely so. The overhead projector is dependent on electricity and special pens. If neither of these are available, say in the centre of Australia, or in overseas countries, a flannel graph could just be the ideal substitute.

My suggestion to you is that you do some research on methods that were once used, and with some prayer-inspired thinking, update the technique by fitting them into areas perhaps never used before.

One of the great dangers in this throw away society of our day is that because it is 'old' it is therefore no use. I have never been able to buy that argument at all. The sun is old but it still is used, and being used more effectively as we think along the lines of solar power, or learn how to protect ourselves from ultra-violet rays. The moon is also old and despite the fact that United States astronauts have planted their size 10-12 feet on its surface, it still is romantic to lovers who sit below it and notice the beautiful effect in one another's eyes and hair.

The Devil is going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour and one of his confidence tricks is to make us believe that the old methods should be thrown away, and because a method is new, it's wonderful. I can't accept that at all. Some years ago I was given a wonderful new antibiotic tablet. It was the latest and a young doctor gave it to me, and nearly ruined my health completely. It took an old doctor to rescue me and put me back on my feet again. I am not saying 'old' is better than 'young', but what I am saying is don't fall for the con trick that because it is old it is of no value at all. After all, you will have to throw away many of the world's great discoveries, writings and music if you fall for that Devil's lie.
in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing'. We do not have to be scholars to know that 'nothing' means not a thing. In 1 Corinthians 4:20 it says, 'For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power'.

We are not left here by God to build our own kingdom, but to be a co-worker with God in the building of His kingdom.

It doesn't take much to do great things for God when we are in a direct line with God's will. Perhaps a smile, a sentence, a word, not much at all. You see, Moses parted the Red Sea with a rod plus God. The Israelites had the double walls around Jericho come tumbling down with the most unlikely weapons. Gideon's victory was caused by very weak, small things. It was the plus God in each case that mattered.

Some of the old soul winners who lived a century or more ago saw things happen which we have not seen today. When Billy Sunday preached, the brewing industry got so worried at hotels closing down, they set up a fighting fund against him. People sometimes overlook the power the man had and are taken up with his unusual ways of presenting the Gospel.

They forget that hotels closed, so did brothels. The prostitution racket was greatly disturbed by the number of 'girls' becoming Christians. Towns lost a lot of vice. You see, Billy Sunday had a large portion of the 'plus God' method.

What we need today is to study the McCheynes, the Braineds, the Wesleys, the Sundays, and many of the great prayer worriers of other days. George Muller, Rees Howells, Praying Hyde, and those of this kind of Christian. Old prayer warriors can all teach us how to pray.

While I believe with all my heart in loving God with all my mind, seeking to know all about the Bible, its background, its promises and its great soul saving doctrines, unless we keep our knowledge in true perspective by mixing it with humility, we may be smart intellectuals and powerless.

The world has yet to see what God can do in an through a many wholly given over to Him. 'I will be that man', said evangelist D.L. Moody. Cambridge University students who tended to treat this uneducated man as a joke, saw God's Spirit use Moody till some of the students became part of a great missionary movement.

Make sure your plans are God's plans.

In organisation, be disciplined in your work. There is no reward for laziness and slipshod Christian work. Always give strict attention to detail.

Finally, for the servant of God, there is no substitute for saintliness - not success, or power, or special charisma, just saintliness. Remember too, that it is our duty and privilege as evangelists to be men like Jesus, going forth to warn or to win people. Either way, it is part of God's plan. May God bless you and make you fruitful.