

EMPHASIZING "PERSONAL" EVANGELISM

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. How many would like to see more people obey the gospel of Jesus Christ? To see more people become Christians?

B. How many believe it is the work of the church to convert the lost?

C. How many believe it is the work of the "hired" and "full time" evangelist to convert the lost?

D. How many of you would like to convert someone to Christ yourself?

1. The number responding indicates that many of you would like to do better at evangelism.

E. Sad truth? Sometimes, instead of being "fishers of men" we have become "keepers of the aquarium"!

1. A question for this church – is this a fishing venture or an aquarium?

F. Why, if we want to do better (and I believe that we really do) don't we do better?

1. I believe that there are at least three basic NEGATIVE reasons.

2. We can emphasize personal evangelism by de-emphasizing some negative areas.

a) The "clergy-laity distinction."

b) Institutional vs. individual work.

c) Too much emphasis on the building / physical plant.

G. Note: NOTHING I say is meant to discount the need for preaching the gospel!

1. Romans 1:16

2. Romans 10:14-17

3. 1 Corinthians 1:18-21 ... "foolishness of preaching" NOT by "foolish preaching"

II. THE CLERGY – LAITY DISTINCTION – (thus WE do not preach Christ!).

A. Definitions:

1. **Clergy**¹ n. 1: the body of men ordained to the service of God in the Christian church. 2: the official or sacerdotal (sacerdotal – priesthood from root sacer – sanctify) class of a religion. 3: clergymen (member of the clergy).
2. **Laity**² n. 1: the people of a religious faith as distinguished from its clergy.

B. First ... who would you choose?

1. Trend for today:
 - a) Ph D
 - b) Th D
 - c) Doctor of Divinity
 - d) Master ... of something.
 - e) Many (too) Christians today are impressed by degrees from various Divinity schools – Harvard, Yale, Princeton – or some brotherhood preacher school.

C. No such distinction made in the New Testament

D. Whom did God choose?

1. Fishermen.
 - a) Matthew 4:18-21 (Peter, Andrew, James & John).
2. A publican.
 - a) Matthew 10:3 (Matthew – PUBLICAN³ 2: An under-collector of Roman revenue – the ordinary publican, the lowest class of the servants engaged in the collecting of revenue (Levi example).
3. Carpenter – Mark 6:3 (Jesus Himself) – “is this not the carpenter, son of Mary?...”
4. Physician – Colossians 4:14 (Luke) “Luke the beloved physician...”

¹ Webster's 7th New Collegiate Dictionary

² Ibid

³ Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary

5. The Bible way? Ordinary men ... not "preacher types." Not men trained in seminaries for the "clergy."

E. The NEED for ALL Christians to be "ministers." – See definition of Clergy: : the body of men ordained to the service of God in the church.

1. "Ordained" means simply "separated to" ... "set apart for" or "called out..."

a) Are not all Christians "ordained to the service of God in the church"?

2. Paul encouraged "saints" to "Hold fort the word of life"

a) Philippians 2:14-16

3. Some preachers may become jealous (or fearful) of others who are successful at teaching (TRY to make me jealous!!!)

4. Paul was himself taught by "just a disciple"

a) Acts 9:10 " a certain disciple at Damascus" – "a devout man " – Acts 22:12.

5. A city is not lit by one light – but by many small ones. (Even the greatest light will not shine very far in the dark. Stadium lights make a good example – it takes many!)

F. Preachers who don't want to GO.

1. Happy to "keep house."

2. Happy to be "secure."

a) Those who view working with a large church as a "career advancement" ... would not think of working at a "small" or "difficult" place – one not self-supporting.

3. Time so cluttered by "serving tables" ... that they have no time for evangelism!

a) Cf. Acts 6:2

b) Brethren – some churches expect the preacher to visit (make house calls) everyday!

c) Preacher "sick" calls – (elders duty – James 5).

(1) Do I have a duty to visit the sick? Yes I do! But it is because I am a Christian, not because I am a

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preacher!

4. Wait on the offended calls.
 - a) Offended over preaching (Jesus said "let them alone")
 - b) Offended over a perceived "snub" ("You didn't speak to ME")
 - c) Offended in a squabble with another Christian.
5. Write for the brotherhood "journals" – feel duty bound to protect the brotherhood.
6. Spend more time debating with other preachers on the internet than teaching in the local church or the local community.
7. Run an "information" service ... brethren are upset if he doesn't publish a bulletin (one way we make sure he is busy).
 - a) Expect him to be a public relations representative to the community.

G. Fostered by "Pastor / clergy" concept (i.e. "my preacher" – "my minister" ... idea one has not been officially visited until visited by the "preacher")

1. Sometimes (many times) is promoted either intentionally or unintentionally by preachers themselves because we don't know how to break the traditions that surround us!
 - a) Sometimes the idea of preachers is – "only work two days a week ... preach two sermons on Sunday and a Bible class on Wednesday night."
 - b) E.g. Letter written to T.R. elders ... "preacher has not been to see me!" Edwards.

H. Preachers MUST be willing to "go preach."

1. Consider the duties of the evangelist:
 - a) 1 Timothy 4:13
 - b) 2 Timothy 2:15
 - c) 2 Timothy 4:1-5
2. Brethren, we have often turned gospel preachers into "waiters" – i.e. serving tables ... instead of proclaimers of the gospel!

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3. Do you have the idea that all preachers have to do is two sermons a week, etc.? Therefore he has time to pick up supplies, groceries, run people to the doctor and to town, etc.

a) This certainly has its place ... and time and need for the one who may be the preacher ... but not because he is a preacher ... because he is a Christian ... therefore ... he can and should TAKE HIS TURN!

b) BTW ... there is a reason God designed for the work of deacons!

I. The "every small church must have a preacher" syndrome.

1. Where we support men at every small place just so they can have a full time preacher.

a) Church may be there for 50 or 60 years and not grow (numerically or spiritually) or has already reaped the harvest (e.g. Gladesville, WV)

b) They may have been feuding for 49 of those 50 years and only need a referee! (Summersville).

c) Sometimes there will be a number of churches within a few miles of each other – each having to have a "full time" man (becomes sort of a status symbol) ... often because these churches cannot get along with each other!

2. Brethren, preachers need to be elsewhere – do you realize how many cities / countries do not have Christians in them?

3. This is not intended to be negative against some small places or even large places ... Paul was at Ephesus for 3 years.

4. The church needs to develop talent from within.

a) Teachers to edify.

b) Teachers to preach to the lost.

c) Teachers to evangelize the community.

(1) The habit of many churches is to allow the one or two men who already do ... do all the teaching!

(2) Do you need to be training other men to develop their talents as public teachers?

(3) I recognize the differing degrees of ability.

(a) Go as far as you can ... get help.

(b) Most 5th grade math teachers cannot teach calculus, but can guide students through the basics, then direct the student to who can.

III. INSTITUTIONAL VS INDIVIDUAL.

A. Much of the church today has an “institutional” view of the work of the church:

- 1. Herald of Truth**
- 2. One Nation Under God**
- 3. Boles Children’s Home**
- 4. Hospitals**
- 5. Schools, etc.**

B. Not saying that there is not a place for the collective effort of a congregation in reaching the lost (meetings, special classes, etc.) ... there is ... but, there is sometimes too much emphasis placed on collective efforts, and not enough on individual actions.

C. Consider the emphasis of the New Testament on individuals:

- 1. The “Great Commission” was given to individuals.**
 - a) Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20.**
- 2. Those “scattered abroad” who went “everywhere preaching the word” were individuals.**
 - a) Acts 8:1-4**
 - b) Went everywhere.**
 - c) Not supported.**
 - d) Not governed by organization/institution – there wasn’t any!**
- 3. The Holy Spirit sent individuals – Barnabas & Saul from among 5 teachers in the church at Antioch.**
 - a) Acts 13:1-4**

(1) Perhaps supported by the church, but sent by the Holy Spirit -- Antioch did not control where, when, etc.

(a) Cf. Acts 13:4-6

4. Individuals need to be busy teaching the truth. It is the wrong idea for one to say, "I'll preach IF you will pay me." (Should prove himself first).

a) When a man gets out of work ... "I will preach."

(1) Some have idea "two sermons and a Bible study a week" ☺ easy life!

5. Need to involve ourselves in the community. Not in the sin of the community ... in the people of the community – contact with the lost.

a) How many of your neighbors do you know?

b) Sometimes we become like the Essenes' of the New Testament (purity party that believed they must separate themselves entirely from those about them lest they become contaminated.)

c) Or Pharisees (separatist) – have we become separatists? Formal? Stiff? Stand-off-ish? ... do we have a monastical view?

d) A new convert is many times the best personal worker – zeal, enthused, and still has ties with the community!

e) Inspire home studies – "Do you read the Bible?" "NO" "Can I come read with you?" "YES" "Can I come read with you?"

6. We need to make our homes centers of evangelism. (Our church building can be either an advantage or a millstone).

a) Draw "house to house" illustration here (Harold and Dorothy Snider).

b) Members are often scattered among different communities – that is good – use it to our advantage!

c) We need families in communities – not necessarily "preachers."

(1) Like dandelions – where there is one, there will soon be more!

IV. EMPHASIS ON BUILDING / PHYSICAL PLANT.

A. Churches often place such emphasis on the physical plant that they burden the whole church with such debt as to effectively eliminate collective evangelism!

B. Some feel it important that the “church of Christ” have a building at least as good as the denominations about them.

1. What happened to schools, store fronts, barns, under the tree? (I’ve preached in all of these places!)

2. Maybe it would be good for us to remember where we came from?

C. Insist that all local work / teaching / evangelism be done there (building) ... sinners must “come.”

D. To my knowledge, the local church was not established for evangelism “per se” – established for edification.

V. CONCLUSION:

A. To be successful:

1. Must sanctify the Lord God in our hearts.

2. Must be greatly concerned for the lost around us.

a) Cf. Acts 17:16

(1) KJV “his spirit was stirred within”

b) Look around ... the fields are white unto harvest!

3. We need to place more emphasis on “personal evangelism” – “You and I” Christianity!

4. A scattered church is good ... if individuals are teaching (Acts 8).

5. How many of you would REALLY like to see your neighbor avoid hell and go to heaven?

6. How do we go about it?

a) Pray

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- b) Study (prepare daily)**
- c) Emphasize Scriptural Authority.**
- d) Illustrate.**
- e) Be sincere.**
- f) Bring to conclusion.**

7. Remember – You have an “Open Door”

I believe this outline originated with Sewell Hall (?)