

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

WE NEED MORE EVANGELISTS

Where have all the Evangelists gone? In his autobiography, *'Be Myself'*; Warren Wiersbe calls Evangelists, an *'endangered species'*! Church-based Evangelists are even rarer. We desperately need genuinely qualified Pastors and Bible teachers whose heart are out for the job and praise God when they are being raised up, but we need Evangelists, too. I have heard it said by people going into the ministry that they want to *"feed sheep,"* but who is bringing the sheep to birth? We need evangelical truth not only for those who want to know (i.e. believers), but also for those who do not want to know (i.e. unbelievers).

I am not sure that Evangelists can be taught, but I am concerned that some are being re-taught away from their natural gifting and calling. There is a sense in which each believer is to be an Evangelist ... that is, to be witness (share his faith) and to develop the work of the ministry. However, the Evangelist who has a gift of ministry is different in some ways. Again, God knows which members of the body He can best develop to minister in that gift because He can see the person's whole life and He knows whose heart (attitude) is most able to be developed to the point of an Evangelist.

As one traces the theme of the evangelist through the Bible and history, it becomes clear that God has consistently set aside people for the task of reaching out to the lost. God develops ... they are not born developed by predestination. God sees into the future, discerning whose heart is trainable / teachable. Then, He chooses those vessels and starts developing them for His service through the help of the church leader. The first two Evangelists we can identify in the Book of Acts, besides the Apostles themselves, were Philip and Stephen. Both of them began as handlers of money. (Acts 6:2-3,5 & 21:8).

Most Christians rub shoulders with the unconverted daily. It is a thrill and privilege to be able to share the Lord Jesus with them. One to one-friendship evangelism seems, at present, to be the most effective way of winning people to Christ. In God's good time we trust we will be able to win friends for Christ. Being an Evangelist in one's place of work, neighbourhood, or with family and friends is a duty indeed yet realistically, we are touching only a small minority of people through this method, and most of those will be people similar to ourselves (fellow country-men). Perhaps this is why most of our churches are of a single race or colour.

Who reaches those who do not have Christian friends? "Cold contacting" is looked down on, but it is better than leaving people un-evangelised. My plea is for setting aside men and women to devote themselves to evangelism full time, in the same way Pastors, Deacons and Elders are appointed in the church. Their emphasis will be to proclaim the Gospel. Christ crucified will be their abiding theme. There are many evangelistic strategies which churches and Christian fellowships can follow. I would like to make five specific suggestions:

1. Pray for more Evangelists: - Jesus said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful ... ” (Matt. 9:38). Christ was saying that the great needs of today can be met only by prayer and people. The harvest is so great that labourers are needed. What a blessing it is when a church or fellowship has a team of Evangelists to relate to the unsaved world around them, without becoming like them.

2. Look for Evangelists: - If God “gave ... some to be Evangelists” (Eph. 4:11), they must be in our congregations. Perhaps we could help identify and encourage them. Perhaps we are failing to look for such people. Christian leaders especially ought to be noticing people with evangelistic energy, burden, and talent, and then encouraging them to develop their gift. Leaders also can create ministry opportunities within the church framework for such up-coming Evangelists.

3. Train Evangelists: - Evangelists are more caught than taught. In other words, some people have a gift from God for evangelism. Yet every gift needs to be developed and refined. What opportunity exists for new Evangelists to be trained? Often young people with evangelistic heart go to Bible College, but their fervour may be quenched by the demands of learning and the pursuit of academic success, especially if a program of evangelism is not included.

4. Churches should use Evangelists: - Christians have been intimidated by the godlessness of our society into near-silence in our witness. Instead of becoming more lovingly aggressive in our evangelism, we seem to have huddled into safe zones or redirected our efforts into socio-cultural or political activities every Sunday afternoon. Yet the finest act of friendship and the greatest social good that Christians can do is to preach the gospel to unconverted people. Let every church begin to organise evangelistic events and programmes regularly! Evangelists could be used to spearhead the evangelistic strategy of groups and individuals. Unconverted people who come to evangelistic meetings are usually people who are brought (not just invited). If there is confidence in the Evangelist and in the program, Christians will bring their friends for whom they have been praying. Those converted are generally those who have been brought and prayed for.

5. Pray for Evangelist: - Regular prayers in church and at prayer meetings emphasise the importance of evangelistic work in the minds of believers, as well as being a blessing in themselves. What an encouragement for Evangelists to know they are being prayed for. All Christians (*including the housebound and those who feel they can do little for the Lord*) can be involved in evangelisation by praying.

6. Support Evangelists: - To support financially or in other practical ways is a means to share in the work of the Evangelist. Individuals and churches that are really behind an evangelist or a team of Evangelists are a great encouragement. It is time for the church to ask itself, “Where and why have all the Evangelists gone?” Are we trying to fight a war without the armaments necessary for victory? As someone said, “We need men and women... who are humble before God, and are aware that their power comes from His indwelling Holy Spirit, but who are confirmed in their minds that God has given them a high calling as His ambassadors”. May it please God to release on our leaders, the Spirit of enlightenment and of wisdom that they may see the need for more Church-based Evangelists in our Churches