# The Last Groan of a Dying Church

**Clayton Pepper** 

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### **Editor's Introduction**

Before his death in July, 2001, Clayton Pepper asked me to oversee the completion and publication of this book. I promised that I would do the best I could, and I later renewed that promise to Maxie, his widow. For almost a decade we had worked closely together with Restoration Radio Network International, Nashville, Tennessee. He and I had become good friends. In fact, he almost became as close as a brother in the flesh that I never had. Realizing that death was near, he asked me to speak at his funeral, which I did. He also asked that I write his biography, which I plan to do. This I had barely begun when he became ill and soon passed away. However, the Lord willing, I plan to complete this project one of these days.

Clayton will long be remembered and his influence felt among churches of Christ in the field of church growth and evangelism. Few in the brotherhood today know more about church growth than did he, for this was his life-time study. As I stated in my eulogy, I believe that if more had listened to him carefully, read and studied his writings on the subject, and had taken seriously his expertise and counsel, we would not be experiencing many of the problems that plague our vast brotherhood today.

Many long hours have been spent preparing this book for publication. But I believe that it will prove to be well worth the effort. I want to thank our publisher, J.C. Choate, for agreeing to publish this work without even seeing the completed manuscript. I am sure that this is because he knew brother Pepper so well and knew that whatever he had to say and write would be biblically sound and worth much to the readers. I also want to thank those who contributed chapters: Jerry Carmichael and Eddie Lawson.

I also added a chapter about "Reviving Gospel Meetings". Additionally, many thanks go to Maxie and the family for their input and efforts to have this book completed and published. Special appreciation is extended to Rachael Roberts, who worked closely with brother Pepper and me here in the RRNI office and who was always ready to give valuable assistance with proofing and typing.

Roy Beasley Nashville, TN April, 2002

### **About the Author**

### Clayton Pepper 1928-2001

Clayton Pepper was born in 1928 in a log house near Taft, Tennessee. He grew up on a farm during the Great Depression and World War II. He knew what hard work was. Times were hard and he learned to do without. He attended school at Blanch, Tennessee, finishing the eighth grade. In 1950 he married Maxie Cherry. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in August of 2000. Their children are Randy, Rhonda, John Ronnie, and Anita. There are also 11 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Clayton was a family man. He loved his family.

Baptized at the early age of 11, he grew up in the church at Taft, Tennessee. He credited his desire to preach to his grandfather, "Pap". Clayton was the oldest grandchild and Pap's favorite. Although "Pap" was not a Christian, he would often take Clayton on his knee and say, "You are going to grow up and become a preacher someday." His mother also had a great influence upon his life. He described her as being the spiritual backbone of the family. Her favorite saying was, "It always feels good when you have done the right thing." And Clayton always tried to do the right thing. Doing the right thing was a priority in his life. His father, J.C. Pepper, was one of the first elders at Taft. The church was always important in the lives of the Pepper family.

## Clayton Pepper, a Servant of God

Clayton grew up and became a meat cutter by trade. His father helped to get him a job in a butcher shop in Fayetteville, Tennessee. He was fired from this job when he asked for time off to interview for a better job in Nashville. He spent the next year tending a crop of cotton near Taft. Soon afterward he was hired by a grocery store in Madison, Tennessee, and they became members of the Madison church of Christ. Ira North had a great impact upon his life. He became his mentor and his inspiration. The elders of the church must have recognized the great potential in this young man, for they took him under their wings and encouraged him. He became a deacon in charge of Personal Evangelism. He read Otis Gatewood's book, You Can Do Personal Work, and it changed his life. He had always had a desire to win souls to Christ, and this book taught him how to do it. His boss gave him a five-dollar mimeograph machine, and he began cranking out small pamphlets and mailing them to people he knew. He had not tried writing on his own, so he used borrowed material. Brother North encouraged Clayton to start a Personal Work class at Madison. Within two years and eight months the class had become responsible for 223 baptisms and restorations. Later it was reported to him by one of the members of the class that within ten years the number of responses had increased to 1,000. Clayton has always believed and preached that there is no substitute for hard work in church growth.

Still he had that unfulfilled desire to preach, but was hampered by a low self-esteem. One day the owner of the grocery

store, knowing of Clayton's church activities, suggested that he enroll at Watkins in Nashville and take courses in English and Public Speaking. He did. He worked 60 hours per week, got off at 6:30 p.m. and drove to Nashville to attend classes. After taking some of these courses, Clayton and others who were interested, persuaded brother North to teach a training class at Madison. Before he had the opportunity to stand before the class the first time, brother North came in on a Wednesday night and said. "Clayton, I want you to go to a congregation near Ashland City this Sunday and preach." It nearly scared him to death, but he went and was soon preaching once a month. One Sunday the newspaper carried the story of a young man serving time in jail for check forgery. The jail was a few miles from where he was preaching. After some visits, during which he taught the young man, he was converted. The sheriff said that if the boy had a place to live and a job they would release him. Brother Pepper went to work to provide this need, and the boy was released.

Word began to be spread about the successful personal work program at Madison, and Clayton started receiving calls to come to help and encourage congregations in starting their own soul-winning programs. His writings were growing in demand. Our brethren were waking up to their responsibilities in leading others to Christ, and Clayton Pepper was there to provide help and guidance.

One day brother North came to Clayton and told him about receiving a letter from a family who lived in a remote area of Hickman County, Tennessee. He asked Clayton to go and see what he could do for them. It was a long way from Madison, and the roads were not good. He and his helper became lost several times but finally located the house sometime after dark. The

family had already retired for the night. They knocked on the door and a light went on inside and someone came to the door. They stated their business and were invited inside. The whole family got out of bed and gathered in the kitchen. Clayton sat on a lard can and studied with them for several hours. He may have made other trips, but the result was that the man, his wife, and some of the children obeyed the gospel. Soon after this the family moved closer to Nashville. On a Sunday, one of the teen-aged boys rode his bicycle to attend a nearby congregation. When the invitation was extended he went forward and requested baptism. The preacher would not baptize him because he didn't think he knew enough. He was not aware of his studies with brother Pepper. On his way home on his bicycle this young man was struck by an automobile and was killed instantly. How tragic! We should think twice before turning down a request for baptism.

### **Juvenile Court**

His interest in saving souls reached out even farther. Like his Savior, Clayton was interested in helping little children. He and Maxie became the first house parents at Madison. It was during this time that Judge Sam Davis Tatum, a Juvenile Judge and a faithful Christian, was trying to persuade the churches of Christ in Davidson County, Tennessee, to employ someone to work with the 300 or so young people who were coming into his court each year, whose preference was the church of Christ. Brother North and the Madison elders recommended brother Pepper for this important work. On January 12, 1959, brother Pepper left his secular job and went to work in Juvenile Court, sponsored by the churches of Christ. Soon he was asked to become Juvenile Protection Chairman for Davidson County Parent Teachers

Association. At times he was speaking as many as three times a day to the various PTA's in the county. Brother Pepper believed in a Christian fulfilling his civic responsibilities as well as his religious duties.

Clayton had not been at the court long before he was having children of all ages referred to him for placement in Christian homes. The old detention quarters were on the fourth floor of the building. There were no facilities to care for the children under five years of age, and there were no means of separating delinquent children from those who were just neglected. Judge Tatum had been pleading with county officials to construct a new detention building. Brother Pepper joined the Judge's efforts by arranging for PTA officials to take turns visiting the old detention facilities. This aroused the community and in 1966, a new detention facility was built. Over a period of 30 years, brother Pepper placed more than 600 children from the ages of three days to 17 years of age. He served in the court for 31 years.

### Other Accomplishments

His accomplishments are almost too numerous to comment upon. He was co-founder of Happy Hills Boy's Ranch. This came about because of his concern that young boys coming into the court on minor charges might turn to more serious crimes. He wanted to provide for them a better environment where they would come into contact with Christian role models and where they would be taught God's Word daily. Thousands of delinquent children and their parents were counseled. God only knows how many of these youngsters were rescued from a life of crime through his influence.

In about 1971 Clayton also played a prominent role in start-

ing the Great Commission School, which is still in operation today. Over the years this school has trained hundreds of soul winners for the Lord.

In 1975 Clayton had a leading part in a year long campaign in Davidson County, Tennessee, called, "Let Freedom Ring". Twenty-six congregations joined together for this campaign. Each trained its own workers, worked its own community, and held its own gospel meeting during the week of October 5, 1975. It included home Bible studies, telephoning the community, knocking on doors, and distributing gospel literature. Young people were used in doing the telephoning. Advertising included radio, TV, billboards, and bumper stickers. A professional advertising agency was used. The number of responses just during the gospel meeting week totaled 634.

### Restoration Radio Network International

In 1990 Clayton suffered a serious heart attack, making it necessary for him to leave the court. But God was not finished with him, yet. Roy Beasley, Executive Director and speaker for Restoration Radio Network International, invited him to become Director of Listener Communication. His creative insights were challenged, but he arose to the task. After reading the mail for three months, and seeing that most of it came from religious leaders from all around the world, he conceived of the Apollos Program based on Acts 18. The plan was simple. These leaders, once converted, would in turn convert their followers. We furnished the literature and the guidance. Since that time there have been reported more than 40,000 baptisms and nearly 1,000 congregations established. This program focuses on explaining more perfectly the word of God to those who are already religious.

### Clayton Pepper Center for Church Growth

One other dream of brother Pepper has been fulfilled. He dreamed of Christian colleges fully embracing the work of training students to share the gospel with the lost. In December of 1996, the President of Ohio Valley College in Parkersburg, West Virginia, invited him to come and share with him and the administration how he perceived a church growth center could work with the college and the churches of Christ in the northeast. The plan was well received and presented to the board where it received enthusiastic support. In March of 1997, the first public announcement was made. On January 1, 1999, Jerry C. Dyer became the director of the Clayton Pepper Center for Church Growth. This broad plan, which includes a church growth library, has been enthusiastically adopted by the college, and the churches of Christ keep brother Dyer busy speaking and helping them to develop into growing congregations.

Clayton Pepper was indeed a man whose talents have been multiplied and whose work has been blessed by God.

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### Publisher's Statement

I am glad that I could count Clayton Pepper as my personal friend, but above all, as a brother in Christ. I had several opportunities to be associated with him in various meetings and to read his materials on personal work, church growth, and world evangelism. He became a giant in his own time as he lectured and published a quarterly magazine entitled *Church Growth*. He was recognized and honored for his work by Ohio Valley College in Parkersburg, West Virginia in the setting up of "The Clayton Pepper Center for Church Growth", with Jerry Dyer as the first Director. Brother Pepper was involved in many good works, the last of which was with brother Roy Beasley and the Restoration Radio Network International.

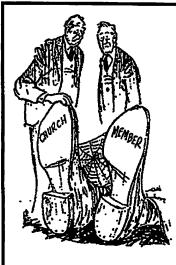
This book is a good example of brother Pepper's understanding of where the church stood in his day, and — sad to say — that state continues, and will continue until the church gets back to its purpose for existence: evangelizing the world. Please read this book carefully and realize that it is based on the true story of a congregation, its growth, and then its demise. Why did it grow and then why did it cease to grow? What could have made the difference?

As fully recognized by the author, the majority of the Lord's people are not evangelistic. We no longer have time for God and His work. We may be "busy" with club-like "church" activities, but we have quit studying the scripture and we have quit teaching it to others. Our conclusion is that no one is interested, that it is a waste of money and time to print and distribute literature,

to preach the gospel by radio, or to do much of anything else. Finally, we have grown weary of facing our foe and have decided to join him. Spiritual death is the end. Of course we know that there are still some left (and probably more than we realize) who are faithful to the Lord, and this will make it possible for the church to survive but, as a whole, we are spiritually lazy, failing to do the work that God has given us to do, and not bearing good fruit. How sad! Brethren, we need to wake up or we will die.

With the foregoing thoughts, I commend this book to you with the prayer that we will all be benefited by it. May God help us to be the church He would have us to be by doing the work that He has given us to do. The end result will be that the world will be evangelized and changed for the better, that heaven might be our eternal home.

J.C. Choate Winona, MS August, 2003



### "I Think Rigor Mortis Has Set In"

### Dead or Alive?

Christ said to the church in Sardis, "Thou has a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Revelation 3:1). Once they had been a working congregation, but now they were content to coast along basking in the glory of a reputation of which they were no longer deserving.

Christians as well as entire congregations must occasionally examine themselves and honestly determine if they are as lively as they used to be. Preachers, elders, deacons, and members must never grow complacent.

# Why the Title of this Book?

This is the true story of a congregation of God's people. They have a nice building in a good community. The congregation is about 45 years old at the present location.

They have always used part-time preachers, been generous in helping good works, and have had regular services and gospel meetings. Their preachers knew well how to visit the sick members, marry the young, and bury the dead. But they did not know how to build a strong, growing church. They were like a hospital. They served those who came. They may be described as largely inward focused. Their building seats about 300. Today 45 seats would be more than enough. No classrooms are needed, as there are no children. The members are old, and so is the preacher. They have given up hope. No matter what is suggested, they give their negative reasons as to why it would not work. There seems to be no possible way for this church to be helped. It appears that death is inevitable unless an infusion of Christians from the general area start attending. Even though there is only one class, they always insisted that the bell be rung at the end of the one adult class in the auditorium on Sunday morning and Wednesday night. A preacher friend of mine, visiting this church, tells of their only elder giving the signal to one of the members to go to the rear of the auditorium and ring the bell.

There are many other congregations that are in the same state of decline and after a few more deaths will expire. This has led the writer to assemble information on a number of causes of the death of churches and give this book the title, **The Last Groan of a Dying Church**. It did not have to be that way. Let me hasten to say that there are many healthy growing churches. Growth is usually a sign of a spiritually healthy church.

Clayton Pepper

### **Contents**

Editor's Int	roductioni
About the A	Authoriii
Publisher's	Statementx
Why the Title of This Book?xii	
Chapter 1:	The Rise and Decline of the Forte Street Church $1$
Chapter 2:	Has the Church Apostatized from Its Mission?6
Chapter 3:	Behold a Sower Went Forth to Sow the Seeds of Evangelism
Chapter 4:	Three Essentials for the Growth of the Church 18
Chapter 5:	How Is Your Zeal for Christ Holding Up?23
Chapter 6:	The Problem of Boredom27
Chapter 7:	Departing from the Work of an Evangelist to that of a Pastor31
Chapter 8:	Campaigns and Evangelistic Gospel Meetings58
Chapter 9:	The Revival of a Church77
Chapter 10:	Preachers in Dying Churches: Evangelist or Priests?80
Chapter 11:	Reviving Gospel Meetings88

### Chapter 1

### The Rise and Decline of the Forte Street Church

The Forte Street congregation was a growing church in the suburban section of town. Soon the building was filled. The area was booming with new houses and apartment buildings. Young families were moving into the community. Permanent and lasting growth seemed certain to be theirs.

The elders decided to sell the old building and build a new one. A beautiful site was selected and a modern and comfortable building was constructed.

One of the elders said that if they could only hire a certain preacher that great growth would be certain. So they hired him.

Their education director was one of the brotherhood's best, having acquired the highest degree of learning in the field of religious education. The elders believed that with such a team maximum growth was assured.

Attendance did grow, at first. They were proud of it. It was always publicized in the church bulletins and placed on the attendance boards in the front of the auditorium. But with the passing of years something happened — decline set in.

More and more seats became vacant. More people were dying and moving away than new people were moving in. It was difficult for the preacher to speak to such a scattered audience. The singing was not good. Pleas were made for the audience to come close to the front, but cooperation was poor.

Classrooms were built across the back of the auditorium so that the audience would have to move closer to the front. They discontinued publishing their attendance figures. The attendance boards at the front of the auditorium were removed.

What had happened? This church had grown, not because it was evangelistic, but because of *mobility*. It grew because people were moving into the area. As someone has said, it was not growing, it was swelling! The attendance grew because babies were being born — generation, not regeneration.

They relied on the false assumption that a fine building, a well-known preacher, and a well organized program of religious education would assure growth. However, their efforts were mostly unevangelistic. They were inwardly focused. Like a hospital, they ministered only to those who came.

Their initial growth was not due to being an evangelistic, soul-winning church. The truth is, the preacher was not a personal evangelist at all. He did not take the lead in soul winning or training others to win souls. In fact, growth had come so easily that the elders did not even see the need for the preacher to devote himself full time to the church. He had another job at a nearby college.

This was also true of the education director. Although he had been through some of the best of our Christian schools, he did not know how to have an evangelistic Bible school, nor did he engage in training Christians to win souls. But the elders thought their policies would assure continued growth.

But now they woke up to the realization: Growth was no longer possible, retreat must be accepted. However, the real truth is, this church had grown because the people came to church

services, not because the church went to them. Neither the elders, the preacher, nor the education director knew how to develop an evangelistic church. They had taken the credit for the church's growth; now they must take the blame for a lack of growth. If the church had been evangelistic from the beginning, things might be different now.

These brethren did not know how to produce an evangelistic church. They had not studied church growth principles. They did not know anything else to do but to retreat and blame the failure to the attitudes of the lost. They convinced themselves that they had done all they could do.

What was their fatal mistake? In short, the church failed to pattern itself after the work of Jesus and the twelve or the apostolic Jerusalem church. They tried to produce another congregation like those they had read about or had seen. Like Israel of old, who wanted a king so that they could be like the nations around them, this church wanted to be just another 20th century church that was just a little better and a little bigger.

If they had followed the Biblical pattern in evangelism as carefully as they had other identifying marks of the New Testament church, perhaps that one congregation could have carried the gospel to the whole city and beyond.

Jesus had told the apostles to take the gospel to every creature, not just those who would come to where they might be speaking (Mark 16:15). On the Day of Pentecost, when the apostles preached to a large crowd, well over 3,000 people in that audience were sinners. In an effort to reach every creature, Luke writes, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42 KJV). It would

have made grace cheap and souls of little value to have rejected God's desire to have all men saved and come to the knowledge of the truth by limiting their efforts to reach the lost to four hours in seven days at one public place by one professional speaker.

In the face of the rulers' orders not to preach Christ, arrests, persecutions and even death, the Jerusalem church went forth to reach every creature. The Forte Street church never had any of these problems. Paul was bound by a literal chain; they were bound by chains of ease and tradition.

Growth was certain for the Jerusalem church because they were sowing the seed of the kingdom in the hearts of lost men. Any farmer understands that where there is no sowing, there is no reaping; and where there is little sowing, there is little reaping. These early Christians sowed much seed and reaped a great harvest. The number of souls brought to Christ is in direct proportion to the amount of seed of the kingdom sowed in the hearts of the lost. The amount of seed sowed is determined by the number of sowers and the amount of time spent in sowing.

The Jerusalem church began with some 3,000 converts. After that conversion, we read:

- \* The church had additions daily (Acts 2:47).
- \* The church grew to 5,000 men. Counting women and children, they may have had 15,000 to 20,000 members (Acts 4:4).
- \* "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14).
- \* The apostles were told, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine" (Acts 5:28).

\* It was said of Paul and Silas, "These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also" (Acts 17:6).

We must follow the example of the Jerusalem church:

- \* Multiply intent every creature (Mark 16:16).
- \* Multiply time spent every day (Acts 5:42).
- \* Multiply opportunity every house (Acts 5:42; 20:20).
- \* Multiply the number of workers every member (Acts 8:4; 2 Timothy 2:2; Hebrews 5:12).
- \* Multiply commitment Paul was willing to die for the faith (Acts 21:13; Romans 9:1-3; Romans 10:1).

Some churches had rather fail than pay the price necessary for success. Ephesus was loveless and did not know it. Sardis was dead and did not know it. Laodicea was lukewarm and did not know it (Revelation 2:3).

Forte Street was non-evangelistic and did not know it. What about your congregation?



## Knowledge of Scripture WITHOUT



Understanding God's
Eternal Purpose
and how to Achieve It

WILL NOT Result In Evangelism!

-- Clayton Pepper

Published by the Chyton Pepper Center for Church Growth, Ohio Valley College, 4581 College Parkway Parkersharp, WV 26181

### Chapter 2

### Has the Church Apostatized from Its Mission?

One of the great problems within the church today is "institutionalism". Let me explain what I mean:

One of the meanings given by Webster's Dictionary for the noun "institution" is "established practice, law, custom, etc." The verb "institute" means "to set up; originate and establish,

found, organize." Hence the Lord has instituted or established a procedure, an organization, an institution called the church.

When functioning properly, the church will produce an orderly and adequate propagation of the faith. The Lord's plan will produce converts and help them grow spiritually (cf. Matthew 28:18-20). It would not be possible to achieve the Lord's objectives without the *institution* operating under the organizational structure *instituted* in the New Testament.

This becomes "institutionalism" in the good sense of the term, for the word means, according to Webster, "the upholding of institutions, of their usefulness, validity, or, in the case of established institutions, of their authority and sanctity." This is, of course, what we are taught to do with regard to the divine institution, the church.

However, the problem of "institutionalism" occurs when the means becomes the end, when what we do to support the institution becomes more important than the reason for its existence. When the means becomes the mission, the true mission of the church, to save souls, is lost.

This problem is widespread. It occurs with gradual decay when individuals, committees, and congregations lose sight of the Lord's original goal "to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10 NKJV).

Succeeding generations then are unable to identify with the principles that formed the original purpose for its existence. When the church substitutes the serving of programs for the serving of God's purpose, it fails to achieve the Lord's mission and loses the original spirit and purpose. Organized programs are necessary, for we must do things "decently and in order" (1

Corinthians 14:40). However, we should not lose nor ignore His original purpose.

Someone has well said, "The church which seeks to save its own life will lose it, just as surely as the person who seeks to save his life will lose it." Too often programs lose sight of the Spirit and purpose of Christ. If the program is achieving what the Lord intended, we need to be loyal to the *purpose* of the program and not simply to the program. When great emphasis is placed on attending church assemblies and Bible schools or supporting various programs, causing sight to be lost of what the programs are to be achieving, the problem of institutionalism is the result. When this occurs and the true spirit and purpose of religion are lost, only a kind of formalism remains.

When religion loses its moral and spiritual sensitivity, the real heart of religion is dead. I should point out that through programs of work, people can be trained, led, organized and supervised for the work Christ gave the church to do. Those Christians who claim to be committed to Christ but who will not involve themselves in programs of work usually are lacking in commitment. Good and properly directed programs of work do not have to become ends within themselves, but means to the proper end.

One of the major hurtles in overcoming this situation today is that most people see this as normal. We simply perpetuate the problem and do not solve it. Therefore, as we look at our ineffectiveness in reaching the lost and look for answers, they are not found in our traditional form of unevangelistic religious education.

I am reminded of several statements by Jesus relative to the cold, lifeless formalism He found prevailing in the Jews' religion

while He was on earth: "And He said unto them, full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:9 KJV); "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23); "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not" (Matthew 23:3).

Have means become ends with us today? If we were to ask many Christians today, "What is the real mission of the church?" we would get a variety of answers. Some would say that it is to preach the gospel to the lost, to edify the church, to do benevolent work and to glorify God. Does the church actually have more than one mission? Is there confusion between means and what is the end?

Is Bible study an end or a means to an end; and if an end, what end? What is the goal of Bible study in the modern church today? Does it have a greater goal than achieving good moral living and getting everybody back next Sunday and perhaps making the budget? (I would not minimize the importance of this.) How does it relate to the accomplishment of the real mission of Jesus and His church (Luke 19:10)?

Perhaps one of our greatest strengths may have helped create one of our major problems. We have put great stress on Bible study at the church building, and rightly so. We should emphasize doctrinal soundness as well. However, today there is far more said about coming to Bible study and coming to church than there is about accomplishing the mission. Salvation of the lost is only a by-product of most Bible schools. A by-product is a sub-

stance derived secondarily in the manufacture of another. Evangelization is not usually our primary concern. The first concern is having Bible study at the church building. Do we love the word but not the work?

I once knew a man whose wife was a Christian. He attended Sunday school with her, but after 16 years, he said that no one had spoken to him personally about obeying the gospel. Education directors say it is difficult to find enough Bible teachers for classes. Someone has said that teachers are not taught; they are caught! They are hemmed up in a hall somewhere and their arms are twisted to teach a Bible class that they may have no desire to teach. The number of people who are presently being induced to teach the lost is only one percent. Perhaps if we had studied American history during the regular Bible class period on Sunday morning, we would have no fewer soul winners than we have today. The problem is that the means is accepted as the end, and the good takes the place of the best.

The question is, does it make any real difference to a church captive to this culture if the number of converts double or decrease over the previous year? Because of this misplaced emphasis, there is hardly enough said about seeking the lost to cause the flame of love for souls to burn in most hearts (cf. John 3:16). This system hardly produces enough preachers and teachers to perpetuate itself. The only kind of apostasy with which we are familiar is departing from certain doctrinal truths. The problem with institutionalism is that it is a form of apostasy — it is a departure from the spiritual purpose of God and His Son.

The Bible school should be an equipping ministry (Ephesians 4), equipping the church for the work that it has been charged with doing. When the problem with institutionalism occurs, our

base becomes the field of operation. That is, the church building complex and the church members become the field in which to work rather than a force with which to work. The church takes on an inward focus, and the mission cannot be accomplished.

# Evangelism is a spurt of enthusiasm that appeareth for a little time and vanishes

away. — Clayton Pepper

Published by the Clayton Proper Center for Church Growth, Ohio Valley College, 4501 College Parkmay Parkmay, WV 24181

Chapter 3

### Behold a Sower Went Forth to Sow the Seeds of Evangelism

Behold a modern-day sower went forth to sow the seeds of evangelism in the hearts of church members so that more reapers would go forth to reap the harvest of lost souls.

The sower told of the love of God for the lost: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoso-

ever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). He said Christ had suffered in man's place in order to pay the price of man's redemption: "But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). He quoted the charge given by Jesus to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creations..." (Mark 16:15). He said this applied to His disciples today. He then pointed to the words of Paul, "And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

The sower then pointed out how that all had been given talent and opportunity and that Jesus was like "a man traveling into a far country who called together his servants and delivered unto them his goods." Later he returned for a day of reckoning. Christ is coming. A day of reckoning will come for each of us to determine how we used our talents in the work that He left in our charge (cf. Matthew 25:14-30).

### How the Hearers Responded

Some seed fell upon hard and indifferent hearts and the devil took away the word lest they should believe and obey. They thought it was someone else's job, not theirs.

Others became antagonistic; they said the lost were willingly ignorant. If they wanted to hear the gospel, they would come to the church building.

Some were prejudiced against any change in their methods that would reach more people. Some said, "You cannot reach the people here, they will not listen." The sower told of the great success that many congregations were having by training soul winners who taught from house to house like Paul and the early Christians did. "And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42). "How I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house" (Acts 20:20).

Some said, "Where would we get the workers?" Others said, "We are doing all right as we are."

The sower concluded that they had rather let the people remain in ignorance and be lost than to put forth the effort to save them.

The sower thought of the words of Jesus to those of His day, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves nor permit them that are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13).

The second congregation who heard the sower said, "This is a great lesson; we should begin at once." So they did. Their previous teaching in the church was largely void of how to reach the lost. Their Bible school literature was largely written to defend the faith, but not to advance it. The preacher said he was not taught how to reach the lost in school, except for public preaching. However, in the presence of many doubters and in the absence of preparation, they began. Since they had not studied how to be effective, many mistakes were made. Some of the workers got discouraged and quit. Some criticized the work. After all, to them faithfulness to God had always been regular church attendance and good moral living and helping meet the

church budget. If many came to church gatherings, that was great; if only a few came they were still content. Since this group made up the majority they began to murmur against the work. The elders knew that what the sower had said was true, but they felt that God had given them the right to decide whether they should or should not use all available means to reach the lost. To them the soul seemed to be optional. Since there were complaints, they decided to stop the program. Soul winning was no longer supported nor encouraged.

The sower thought of all the times he had heard the denominations condemned for not respecting Biblical authority. This group had grossly disrespected the authority of God. The sower thought of the time he had heard those words from the last chapter of Revelation quoted: "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18,19).

The sower then visited another congregation where he sowed the seeds of evangelism. They responded enthusiastically. They studied very carefully how others had been successful. There was much motivation for several months. The preacher seemed to put a priority on bringing the lost to Christ. He and the elders were active, they led the way, but with the passing of months, other things seemed to become more important. Little was said about reaching the lost. The leaders became less involved in providing the example. The preacher seldom mentioned reaching the lost. Workers in evangelism began to feel that evidently it

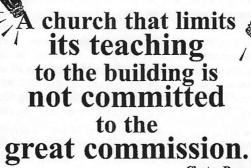
was not a very important work. Making a living, business interests and material gain seemed to become more important. Recreational activities became more important. There was more said about losing a ball game than losing a soul. Bowling, golfing, fishing, gardening and other hobbies seemed to take up the members' extra time. The sower thought of how the scripture says that the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches and pleasures would choke the word out of the lives of many and they would bring forth no fruit (Luke 8). He thought of the church at Ephesus, who had left their first love, and of the church at Laodicea who were lukewarm and how they were told to repent (Revelation 2 and 3).

Then the sower visited a fourth congregation and there again he sowed the seeds of evangelism. The seed fell on good and honest hearts. They were people of prayer and love for each other. They gladly received the word. The leaders arranged for a group of key people to visit a fast-growing, soul-winning church. They studied their program. They studied how they had developed an evangelistic Bible school. The elders and preacher realized that attitudes had changed in America and that they must have an evangelistic program of outreach and not depend only on programs designed to reach the lost who would come to the building. The preacher regularly read church growth materials. He was always enthusiastic and sought to keep the congregation enthusiastic about reaching the lost. The elders read books that would help them plan greater activities toward reaching the lost. They led the way. At least once each year they paid the expenses of key workers to attend a church growth and soul-winning workshop. Some of the elders always went.

The elders said that the Jerusalem church practiced daily

evangelism and had daily conversions; "Praising God, and having favor with all people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved" (Acts 2:47). "And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42). They reasoned that in the past we have set goals for attendance and goals for contributions. We should also set goals for conversions. They concluded that all of our programs must have evangelistic content, and that edification is not an end in itself, it is a means to the end of reaching the lost. Benevolence is not an end; it is a means toward reaching the lost.

The sower then thought of the growth of the first church, the Jerusalem church, under the leadership of the apostles — how they taught daily and had additions daily. Then he longed for a renewal of the church which would have the power to be like this first congregation.



— Clayton Pepper

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### Chapter 4

### Three Essentials for the Growth of the Church

There are three essential ingredients for the future growth of the church.

The first is love. To the church of Ephesus the Lord admonished: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from when thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works or I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou

repent." Love for God and man is a characteristic that is essential. Think of one having the qualities of love described in 1 Corinthians 13, and the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22,23. This will put genuineness into our lives. We will not be wondering where one-half of the congregation is on Sunday night, or where our workers are.

The second essential: Zeal as is seen in the Lord's admonition to the Laodiceans. The Laodiceans, in their own eyes, were doing well spiritually; they did not need to improve anything. It is hard to change satisfied people. This is a comfortable state. However, in the eyes of Christ, the Laodicean Christians were spiritually naked. They were not whole-heartedly for Him, just mediocre. The Lord expressed it this way: "I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou were cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." The solution to their problem was, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:14-20). It is hard to imagine the Lord on the outside wanting inside again. If the Spirit is quenched and no longer indwells the Christians, and the zeal is gone, the church is no more effective in evangelism than a civic organization would be. We see from this passage that the remedy for lukewarmness is to become zealous. Zeal is the second ingredient needed (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:19; Ephesians 4:30). We cannot do the work that has been given to us without these qualities.

The third and most important ingredient is to be committed to the purpose of God and His Son. Ever since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, it has been God's eternal purpose to redeem man. The coming of Christ brought to man that great hope that men for hundreds of years had longed for (Genesis 12:2,3; Isaiah 2:2,3; Matthew 1:21; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Luke 19:10; Mark 1:38).

Read again the account of the zealous proclamation of the gospel as seen in the early chapters of the book of Acts. Nothing could obscure this purpose or take its place. Our priorities can rest nowhere else. Good must not take the place of the best. The love of God for lost men must be heralded around the world in every generation (Ephesians 3:8-12). Cheap, common, and trite things that hinder should be seen for what they are. No longer should we play the role of the unevangelistic Pharisee who seemingly would say, "Lord, we thank thee that there are so many things in the church to do without getting involved in evangelism."

#### Renewal Is Needed

David wrote, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence: and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Psalms 51:10-13).

David felt the need for a clean heart, a renewed spirit and the joy of salvation. He believed that if he had these qualities again that he could teach transgressors and convert sinners to the Lord. While many things are needed to be a good teacher of others, little can or will be done if the inward man is not right.

The word "restore" indicates that David once possessed these qualities and lost them. There is little doubt of the great need for renewal of the inward man in many Christians today. They simply cannot teach transgressors or convert sinners until renewal takes place. The joy of salvation must return! "Wilt thou not revive us again: that the people may rejoice in thee?" (Psalm 85:6).

Men and movements change with the passing of time. The starting point is with great vigor and commitment to a cause. With physical age or age of the movement, that life-giving quality that distinguished it from mediocrity gradually passed away and the vision of the Founder is lost. There is quite a contrast between the Jerusalem church and the congregations of Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea. Someone has said that many think the last words of Jesus were, "Go preach the gospel to every creature," but they were not. The last words to the church were, "Repent or else." These three congregations described in Revelation 2 and 3 were admonished to repent and warned of what would happen if they did not.

Paul recognized the need for renewal. He wrote, "...but though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). Isaiah wrote, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; and they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

### Conclusion

Robert Dale in his book, **To Dream Again**, described nine different steps that churches go through, from the beginning dream, it's plateau, and it's decline. He describes how to revital-

ize the church to help it come alive again. He says, "A new dream awakens the congregation."

A healthy church is born out of a dream — a group of Christians establish a congregation where one is needed. They feel that God wants them to take this action. The group bands together, and the church begins meeting. They do the necessary organizing. They unite around their beliefs. They set goals and priorities. They develop programs, policies, procedures, budgets, and develop certain routines and habits that become the normal way of doing things. If the church does not take steps to revitalize itself, plateau occurs. Then decline sets in. People begin to doubt and say, "Things are not working as well as they used to." This is the nostalgia state. They may begin to place blame. "Is this the right way to make progress?" "Maybe we need to change." It is often at this point where brethren become open to false teachings as a solution to the problem, when, really, renewal is needed. Some become apathetic and take a "wait and see" attitude in hopes that things will get better. Finally, some become alienated and drop out in total disillusionment. This marks the absolute death of the dream for that church.

The dream can be lost in a relatively short time, or it may take a long period of time. The solution is to remember the original dream based on Christ's purpose. Jesus told the Ephesians to "remember from whence thy art fallen" (Revelation 2:5).

The church must be led to dream again, knowing that to stand still is to die.

"What we call revival
is simply a return to normal
New Testament Christianity.
Most of us are so
subnormal
that if we ever became
normal

we would be considered abnormal."

— Vance Havner

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### Chapter 5

### How Is Your Zeal for Christ Holding Up?

Did you know that 2,756,000 religious people drift into nominalism and unbelief each year? This is according to several recent studies. Most of these people probably began with a zealous commitment to Christ and His teachings as they understood them. But soon they began to drift away. This has always been a problem among most religious organizations. It happens among churches of Christ as well as other religious groups. At the time we became Christians, our salvation was great; but in

time this greatness diminishes, and like many of the Hebrews (Hebrews 2:1-4), many of us began neglecting it.

May we compare it to what happens too often in marriage. After the honeymoon is over and the couple settles down to the responsibilities of marriage the glow begins to diminish. Sometimes a husband and wife are held together by the children or legal ties, not by love. Did you ever buy a car that meant so much to you at first that you always kept it polished and clean? Then after a while, when the newness wore off, you lost pride in it and did not care whether it was clean or not?

The Ephesian Christians had renounced worshipping idols and burned their books, worth fifty thousand pieces of silver, making a sacrificial commitment to Christ (Acts 19). But within a 40 year period they had left their first love (Revelation 2:1-5). Their commitment didn't last long. The same was true of other first century congregations. Some of the members of the church at Sardis were spiritually dead (Revelation 3:1-6). Laodicea was neither cold nor hot; just lukewarm (Revelation 3:14-22).

### When Zeal Diminishes, Evangelism Stops

The early chapters of the book of Acts record the beginning and growth of the church. Zeal was at a high level. They were worshipping, fellowshipping, and evangelizing daily (Acts 2:46,47). Rapid growth was occurring. Here we see a direct connection between zeal for the cause of Christ and evangelism. When our zeal for Christ and spreading the good news of the gospel declines, then nominalism occurs.

Today, nominal Christians largely fill our pews. This has now become the accepted standard of faithfulness. Vance Havner wrote in his book, **Repent or Else**, "What we call revival is simply a return to normal New Testament Christianity. Most of us are so subnormal that if we ever became normal we would be considered abnormal!" A zealous person is often a misfit in an indifferent church. The churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 were told to repent and were warned of the consequences if they did not.

The church needs to be warned of the consequences of nominalism. Webster defines the word to mean, "Existing in name only; not real, so called." In most churches about 50% of the Sunday morning audience returns on Sunday evening. This is a sign of nominalism. Because of nominalism almost nobody wants to share the saving gospel of Christ with the lost. Because of nominalism some elders work more as business managers or board members than shepherds and feeders of the flock. Some elders need the eldership more than the eldership needs them! Nominalism removes the preacher from the work of evangelism and makes him a "pastor". Based on an article by Dr. Win Arn of Church Growth, Inc. in Monrovia, California, believers in Christ have declined from 2/3 of the world population in 1900 to 1/3. In 1900 there were 27 churches (all kinds) for every 10,000 people. In 1987 there were only 12 churches for every 10,000 people. According to Church Growth, Inc., in 1990 between 80% and 85% of all churches in America were either plateaued or declining. I believe that nominalism is the major cause. There are only six states in the United States that have a congregation of the Lord's church in every county. Nominalism is killing the church!

Can the church be revived? Robert Coleman wrote in his book, **Dry Bones Can Live Again**, "What we may fail to comprehend is that the fruits of revival can endure only as the conditions for revival are maintained."

### One Helpful Solution

A friend of mine has worked several years with his elders trying to get people more involved in the work of his congregation of 800. After some two years he made what was a startling discovery. They were so unsuccessful in getting people involved who had been uninvolved for five years or more that they discontinued interviewing them. They determined to go only to those who had been members of the congregation less than five years. I am sure that the best time to get members involved is soon after they become members of the congregation. Waiting longer than that may be too late.

## Evangelism is a tree of life that only grows in an atmosphere of love and dies in a climate of

- Clayton Pepper

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indifference.

### Chapter 6

### The Problem of Boredom

Perhaps we think that one should never become bored in a Bible class or church service. But we do! Why? Why do we watch the clock wishing for time to close? Why are we so time-conscious? Most of us want to keep our Christian obligation to be present at least on Sunday morning, but we have about all we want in the allotted time. Once someone said he arrived at 11:00 sharp and left at 12:00 dull. We have fulfilled what we have been taught to do — attend, contribute, and behave!

What about boredom in the adult Bible class? We go through

one book, then another, back and forth through the Bible, no matter how many times the people have already been through it. Members do not plan to go back and serve the law of Moses as some in the New Testament did. They do not want to serve idols as some of the Corinthians had. Most have been Christians a long time and most have moved beyond many of the problems that early Christians had. Now they ought to be teachers but they are not. They do not know how to share the gospel with the lost. In fact, they have never been taught that they should.

They know as much as the teacher in many instances and maybe about as much as the preacher. But we are expected to do what the Hebrew Christians were told to stop doing — "going over the thing again and again." As long as we just go over and over elementary principles written for young Christians and young churches, we will never put the mission of the church in the place that God intended.

What about the mission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (If we do this, there will be babes who must receive the milk of the word.)

### The plan is simple:

- To the apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations."
- "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."
- "Teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you."

We can easily see that the "Go therefore and make disciples" would be passed on to the disciples if they were taught all things that Jesus commanded.

Paul gave the plan to Timothy: "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2 NKJ).

We then see what the Hebrew Christians were expected to do, but did not do.

Our government, in holding Congressional hearings a few years ago on public education, found many faults with it. Some of these were:

- "The well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity."
- 2. "...for too many people, education means doing the minimum work necessary for the moment."
- 3. "...we tend to express our educational standards and expectations largely in terms of minimum requirements."
- "...where there should be a coherent continuum of learning, we have none: but instead an often incoherent, outdated patchwork quilt."

In other words, instead of the Bible being like a carpenter's tool chest in which the owner knows his tools and how to use them, the average Christian's knowledge of the Bible is more like a scrambled puzzle — unskilled in the word of righteousness.

Two of the greatest handicaps in achieving the church's mission are:

- Most of the church is untaught on the subject of evangelism and church growth, including the elders and preachers.
- Apathy For suggested solutions to this problem read chapter five of my book, Church Growth Today, a 34 page examination with recommendations. Published by Quality Printing, P. O. Box 1060, Abilene, Texas, 79604-1060. Evangelism is a tree of life that only grows in an atmosphere of love and dies in a climate of indifference.

# The preacher who must have a crowd, a dollar and a pulpit to turn him on is void of a passion for souls.

— Clayton Pepper

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### Chapter 7

### Departing from the Work of an Evangelist to that of a Pastor

Does the result of our work support the supposition that we are following the New Testament plan for evangelism? Is the work of the preacher more that of a pastor than an evangelist today? Can you find in the Bible where a preacher's work is paralleled with the preacher today? Is there an overlap in what the

preacher is to do versus the elders? Elders are told to "feed the flock!" (1 Peter 5:2). They are to oversee and shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28). They are to "watch for the souls" of the members and must give an account for how they have done it (Hebrews 13:17).

In this chapter, I want to take a careful look at the role of the preacher today in the light of our evangelistic efforts and the biblical role set forth in the New Testament (Ephesians 4:11,12; 2 Timothy 2:2). Numerous writers and speakers have expressed concern for the diversion of the preacher from evangelism and training of others to a role that does little of either. James O. Bard wrote:

"We have defined the preacher's role as that of serving a group of Christians making up a given congregation by teaching them and preaching to them; being primary administrator of the church's affairs under the guidance of the elders; doing the work of the shepherds in attending the flock, visiting the sick and admonishing the fainthearted.

"This view of the preacher's work has its roots in the priest-flock relationship of the Middle Ages, a notion powerfully reinforced by the preacher-as-pastor view emerging from several centuries of traditional Protestantism (Gospel Advocate, July 2, 1987). The late George Benson, former president of Harding University, in a speech said: 'There is a difference between teachers and preachers. We naturally employ teachers in our formal training programs. These teachers develop teachers, just as preachers would be inclined to develop preachers. Consequently, we are turning out a lot of excellent teachers, who desire to teach in school, or serve in a local church feeding the flock. People are largely what they are taught to be. In our schools and colleges we

are developing a growing number of preachers desiring to do the work of feeding the flock, but fewer and fewer evangelists' ("Harding Graduate School Lectures," 1971)."

We can also be sure that pastoring preachers train pastoring preachers. Someone has said, "One of the effects of higher education is that they do not use practitioners to teach practitioners; they take theoreticians to teach people how to be practitioners. We have got 50 years to show that the model does not work." Numerous preachers tell me that they were never trained in how to teach the lost, except through public preaching. A preacher friend of mine said, "I attended one of our well-known Christian schools and am a firm believer in Christian education. I attended chapel services each day and studied the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Not one time do I recall any information being taught on how to do personal evangelism" (Personal Evangelism magazine {now Church Growth}, Fourth Quarter, 1976).

The late Roy Hearn, when director of Memphis School of Preaching, told me of a survey made of graduates to determine what they needed most and did not get in school. The major reply was a lack of teaching in personal evangelism.

Tom Douglas, while a missionary in Brazil, wrote an article published in the July 17, 1979 issue of *Firm Foundation* under the title, "Training Evangelists." He wrote:

"At a recent conference of Brazilian church leaders, a young college student asked the question, 'Why do we put emphasis on men being pulpit speakers rather than being soul winners?' Without realizing it, this young man may have hit on the key to a problem that we face in the Lord's kingdom. It is a problem that we face in all parts of the world. Have we fallen victim to

encouraging our young men to be public speakers at the exclusion of being soul winners?

"Lest we feel that the problem be limited to Brazil, let me state the testimony of an American evangelist. After graduating from a Christian college, he took a preaching job in a large Texas city. His tools for the pulpit and classroom teaching were well prepared. The congregation loved him and his abilities. He is a good public speaker. However, while the weeks passed in preparation, he discovered that the evangelist is to be a soul winner. Isn't it odd that this should be discovered and not already known? The congregation was perfectly happy with his work. The encouragement he received was to be a preacher. The work was never defined beyond preaching and teaching at the church building and a few visits to the hospital. Private teaching of non-Christians was done by a few of the congregation who had special training for this work. Today? He is still a good pulpit speaker. However, his horizons have been lifted higher than his office desk. He is learning to be an effective fisherman of men. He realized that the fields were ready for his labor.

"The need for extending one's work through others has been made obvious in our work. As the evangelist begins to build relationships and teach others, he soon recognizes his limits. There are only so many hours to each day. Often a congregation grows to 50 or 75 and begins to level off. Some are baptized, some are lost. This is a crucial time in the history of a congregation. It can realize the need of all members, especially the men, to be teachers of the Word. Or, it can be comfortable in being served by the full-time evangelist. The evangelist must train those he teaches to be teachers or be doomed to "keep house" for a number of years.

"Paul told Timothy to 'be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others' (2 Timothy 2:1,2). The idea was to find men who would take the message they received to others who would do the same. The emphasis was on the individual.

"There is a lesson for us to learn. This writer maintains that we could have as many preachers as we need and more congregations full of soul winners if our emphasis was switched. We need faithful men to take the message to other faithful men. From this work, pulpit men will rise like cream to the top of the milk. The added blessing is that our pulpit men will already be soul winners.

"Please do not read this as an indictment against preaching. There are too many biblical examples of strong public speaking (mostly to unsaved people) for anyone to deduce that it is wrong to be a good public speaker. The problem is the manner in which we obtain our pulpit men and the exclusion of evangelism in their work. Even the apostles spent time learning and teaching individuals before they were sent to preach publicly. Public speaking is important. However, we win great numbers with a great number of faithful men teaching a great number of individuals."

I asked a preacher friend to write an article for *Church Growth* magazine, when I was editor and publisher, describing the preacher's weekly activities, separating them into two categories: "outward focus" and "inward focus". He was afraid to attempt it because it would reflect that the preachers' activities are more in line with pastoral duties than evangelistic responsibility, resulting in criticism of him. He then told me that while in pursuit of a doctorate, he did much research on the role of the

preacher. He concluded that there is no role described in the scripture for the way the church presently uses preachers.

It has become increasingly clear to this writer that many elders are doing most of their work by proxy—through the man that God intended to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5), leaving the lost without an evangelist in such instances. This is not as true in mission churches as it is in established churches. Most of our schools train men in how to "pastor churches", by men who have pastored churches, and led them to believe that this is their primary function. They go forth, not as evangelists to equip the church to serve, and "appoint elders" as Paul told Titus (Titus 1:5) who were to teach, preach and shepherd the flock, but rather, to serve the church themselves. The church usually hires the preacher to serve them. The members are not equipped to serve. How much longer will we hold up this plan as being God's plan when it is not?

### How Did We Slip into this Denominational Arrangement?

Someone has said that "Necessity is the mother of invention." Martin L. Pierce, writing in the book, How to Set the Church in Order, said concerning the church and the preacher:

"This office is nowhere spoken of in the New Testament. Its rise and development was a matter of expediency just as the erection of church buildings and our present use of song books. Two different situations arose that made it both desirable and necessary to have men set apart who could give all of their time to the spiritual work of the local congregation. In the New Testament record we find the evangelist going from community to commu-

nity, gathering in the people, forming them into congregations and establishing them in the faith. It was also his duty to ordain officers (elders) to take the spiritual oversight when he left them. In the development of religious work, in a given community, the congregation continued to increase in size until at last it demanded as much time and attention as the evangelist had previously given to several congregations. The stay of the evangelist with the churches was for a longer and longer time, until at last one congregation claimed all of his attention. Again, when the officers of a given congregation had been selected, the one who was the best speaker, or whose piety excelled that of the others, would be put forward as a leader. In doing this work he would improve. The congregation would grow in size until at last there would be brought about a suggestion on the part of the congregation that since there was more to be done than the officers could do, and attend to their secular work, that this leader devote all of his time to spiritual work. When he pledged himself to this spiritual work, the congregation would pledge itself to give him temporal support. By this we see that the preacher should have the qualifications of both the elder and the evangelist. His work is a twofold work."

This book was published in the early 1900's by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). You will recall that the Christian church and the church of Christ were one until the split in 1906. The writer believes that this is a description of how the evangelist in the early years of the 20th century became a pastor-preacher in the local congregation. Many churches owned their building and the number of buildings grew with the passing of years. It seemed justifiable to hire a man to preach and do the work the elders did not have time to do.

If we follow their line of reasoning, then as a congregation increases in size there would be a need to hire an associate preacher. Without calling the first preacher the "senior pastor" as some denominations do, he actually does become the senior pastor-preacher and as the congregation grows and with the passing years, there also arises the need for an "education director," then a "youth minister," then a "minister of involvement," and perhaps others. Do the larger congregations really need all these paid staff people plus supporting office personnel? They probably do if church members were not trained and involved. The salaries of preachers in some of the larger churches at the time of this writing may be from \$75,000 to over \$100,000 per year. A part time "pulpit minister" may make as much or more than \$50,000 a year. Some research has shown that 72% of the preacher's time is spent in administrative work. The tragedy of this picture is that evangelism was largely forgotten.

Many college professors were former pastor-preachers. The school produced pulpit preachers to publicly proclaim the word. The preacher's teaching duties were largely confined to the building.

One writer tells about when schools were first started to train preachers. The men went to the church services and taught in the same way as they were taught. They became like their professors. The church members were like students in school. He says in the '20s and '30s people were starved for the Word of God, so they came to hear the preachers as they delivered high-powered Bible lectures. In the '30s, '40s and '50s, church growth came easy, as enough people came from the community to public meetings to give the church many converts. Meetings were often held in school buildings, tents and brush arbors, often drawing large

crowds. Many new congregations were started. But for the most part, those who were on the listening end absorbed the word but had no similar outlet. Church houses often became "lecture halls," and educational buildings became like academic centers. Preaching well-organized sermons became the primary way of teaching. One man said, "I take notes in my Bible at every meeting of the church, and I have all this wonderful Bible information, but something is really lacking in my life. Something is wrong in my Christian service."

Conditions in America began to change in the early '60s. Church attendance began to decline.

As evangelists became pastors their work changed from an outward focus to an inward focus and from members working to bring others to Christ to that of the professionals, and from outreach to the lost to a church-building religion. Evangelists became pulpit ministers, teachers to the church.

The responsibility of the members became similar to the denominations. The tacit "clergy-laity" concept became more firmly in place. Most of the emphasis focused on the behavior of the members, attendance and financial support for the work. The "great commission" became the "great omission" as the professionals did not know how to evangelize nor how to train members to win the lost.

The standard of faithfulness was lowered. Lukewarmness became the standard of faithfulness. Now apathy and indifference have an unshakable grip on many churches so that very little evangelism occurs.

We can see how the clergy-laity system developed. Churches do not have to use these titles to practice the concept. There is no biblical basis for these concepts. The clergy was seen as the one who knew the scripture best and thus the primary feeder of the flock. The laity (members) were the lambs to be fed. The result was that the responsibility for evangelism was divested out of the members and invested in the professional staff. Members were neither trained nor expected to be evangelistic. Religion became largely a lethargic formality. The by-product of all this was to convert someone occasionally.

Following the denominational pattern in evangelism leads the Lord's church down the same path. One church growth teacher said that 50% of the denominational churches have not had a conversion in the past year. As I write this, it is taking an average of 10 Tennessee churches to convert one per year.

Concern for the role of the preacher in the local church goes back to the days of David Lipscomb. Pat Casey, while pursuing a Doctorate at Harding Graduate School in Memphis, researched Lipscomb's writings in the *Gospel Advocate* which he edited between 1895 and 1910. His thesis was entitled, "The Role of the Preacher as Set Forth in the *Gospel Advocate* from 1895 Through 1910 with Beliefs and Consequences to 1980."

During the period between 1895-1910, there was much discussion regarding the function of the preacher. Lipscomb saw a problem with men becoming "professional" preachers. He said, "I think that no greater evil can befall the church than a corps of professional preachers. I mean by that a class of men who preach for the money — where and when they can get the most money." Lipscomb believed that there was a strong temptation to compromise with evil when the preacher was wholly dependent upon a congregation for support. It is not my intention to discourage church-supported preachers. But I do see the danger of one con-

forming to an obligation to satisfy his employer and other dangers:

- The preacher hiring to the church to serve the church could lead to compromise, thus omitting evangelism.
- The churches employ the preacher to serve them not to train and equip them and lead them into the fields to harvest lost souls. This is a compromise. This leads to dependency.
- Elders too often feel that they can delegate most of their responsibilities to the preacher. Often elders limit their own spiritual development because they rely on the paid staff to do the work for them.
- I have no doubt that it takes more courage for a preacher to deal with sin in the congregation because he does not want to run the risk of offending some, which might lead to being dismissed and have to move his family.

In March 1897, Lipscomb stated, "Under the present idea that the church is a body to sustain a preacher to do the work and exempt the members from personal service, there can be no spiritual life or activity in the body."<sup>2</sup>

Lipscomb cites Acts 8:1-4 and observed that all preached because they were Christians. Lipscomb believed the Bible principle of 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

In 1899, Lipscomb wrote, "A dozen men in Nashville who work for a daily living for themselves and their families have done more to spread the gospel and convert sinners in the city than its wealthy churches composed of hundreds of members and

worth millions of dollars...They (these men) are not hunting places to support them, but places, new and destitute places, where they can preach to sinners. This was the course of the apostles and early preachers."

In 1900, Lipscomb wrote in answer to a query by W.J. Brown, "I believe, and have for thirty years believed and insisted, it is hurtful for one man, be he elder or preacher, to monopolize the time of the meeting for worship..."

To limit our preaching to one paid man when there are other capable men is to prop up the clergy system. One does not have to turn his collar around or wear a title to take on the characteristics of the clergy. I have observed churches where only the preacher writes the articles for the front of the bulletin. No one else is asked to write an article. Even at the mid-week service only the preacher leads the devotional and extends the invitation. One such congregation, out of 156 invitations, had only three responses to obey the gospel. By ignoring opportunities to train others we submit to the clergy system. We also ignore the fact that we would have a broader understanding of scripture by hearing others teach as well.

Casey writes, "In 1900, Lipscomb set forth a warning to the churches about a universal coldness and lukewarmness. He believed that one chief reason for such a condition was that people ceased to make personal effort to serve God and man." Lipscomb stated, "What they do is done by proxy. They pay others to do the worship or the work, while they give themselves to money-making and the enjoyment of life."

Lipscomb wrote, "This paper (Gospel Advocate) has always opposed the modern pastor because there is no authority in the

Bible for such a pastor." Lipscomb has reference to preachers whose work is more in line with a denominational pastor than a New Testament evangelist. In many instances this is the pattern followed by the church today. We have slipped into this mode. It is a very comfortable position for everyone. Where the preacher takes on the role of a pastor there are no evangelists.

Casey said, "At the turn of the century (19th century) there was not a clear distinction made between the role of a pastor and role of located preacher." According to John E. Dunn, J.C. McQuiddy, and David Lipscomb, the preacher who functions in the role of a pastor is one who has the following characteristics: First, he devotes all of his time to one church. Second, he is a trained professional preacher and does his work for a stipulated salary. Third, he is hired to take charge of the church, therefore, he superintends all of the work of the church. Fourth, he does all of the preaching. Fifth, he usually keeps the elders and others from maturing and developing in the work of the church.

In 1900, John E. Dunn described the pastor as "one who is asked by the church to take charge of it. He preaches a sermon at an appointed hour. He visits, preaches funerals, performs marriage ceremonies, drums up interest in the church and mingles with the people. For performing these duties, he receives a specified salary."

Dunn went on to raise questions about the preacher's authority to assume such a position and the church's authority for having such a position. He concluded by saying that there is no Bible authority for such a work and that the pastor system is a practice contrary to the Bible and, therefore, an hindrance to the church."

If the preacher is one of the elders he, as well as the other elders, can scripturally be called pastor, as the word pastor, elder, overseer, shepherd, can be used interchangeably as they refer to the same office.

It becomes obvious that the church is to train elders. In addition to knowing the scriptures some of them must be able public speakers. Smaller congregations can jointly provide such training. Larger congregations could, and should, provide public speaking classes, not only for the elders but for prospective preachers.

In 1903, Lipscomb explained how Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church. He cautioned that elders and preachers who attempt to do everything can hurt the church. He wrote, "The danger of the preacher is the same as the elders. He and the people think that he ought to preach to the church all the time. This gives no opportunity to the members to develop themselves. The church that supports a preacher to preach all the time will grow lifeless. Elders and preachers are essential to the work of churches, but if they monopolize the teaching and work they dwarf and destroy the church, rather than build up and multiply it."

Lipscomb said in 1905, "Every Christian is a preacher, evangelist, a missionary." In July, 1905, Lipscomb warned concerning the "official professional preacher" set-up. He wrote, "What can be done to save our preachers from professionalism? The church should not surrender to officialism and professionalism. Who dare say that only the clergy has the right to teach and preach? In the apostolic age every disciple of Christ was a preacher of the word."

I am sure that he had in mind evangelistic work that can be done in one's daily walk of life. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). In 1906 Lipscomb stated that professional evangelists "care nothing, so far as their actions show, for the future development and spiritual growth of the church." Perhaps this helps explain why today 65% of religious people have no interest in people outside the church — 25% have a medium commitment and only 10% have enough commitment to win souls, but only 1% is doing it (from the book Team Evangelism by Larry Gilbert).

It is obvious that Lipscomb saw the professional preacher as not being motivated to take the gospel to the lost.

In 1910, Lipscomb wrote: "The world can never be converted to Christ in the meeting houses or by the regular or professional preacher. There are not enough preachers to reach the masses of the common people. Nor can they be carried to the meeting houses to be converted. The Bible with its teachings must be carried to them at their homes and amid their family associations. There are more Christians and churches in Nashville than in any city of its population in the world. They were made through the private members studying themselves and teaching the word of God in various neighborhoods. Very frequently these private members become earnest and effective preachers. Brethren that go to work when first converted, to learn to teach, grow teaching and continue to spread and multiply."

### Characteristics of a Professional Preacher

In 1939, at the Abilene Christian College lectureship, Guy Woods said, "It will not be seriously denied that there is an arrangement in operation in the church of Christ which bears a

suspicious similarity to the pastor system of the denominations. It is idle to deny this. Elders have, in many instances, employed an evangelist to feed the flock, and take the oversight thereof, to the utter neglect of the work themselves. It is not surprising that, where this is done, the elders are, too often, regarded as but mere figure-heads, without authority and influence in the congregation. Able brethren throughout the brotherhood are becoming more and more alarmed and fearful of the arrangement now in operation among us. It is time that the elders assert their authority, no longer shirk the responsibility that is theirs, and begin to do the work that the Lord expects them to do, thus releasing the preachers to carry the gospel to the lost."

In 1941, L.L. Brigance discussed "liberalism" in the church of Christ. He called special attention to the pastor system and related functions. He said, "There is no denying the fact that the 'pastor system' exists among the churches of Christ today. It is a growing evil. It constitutes a major menace to the cause of Christ. If it continues to develop as rapidly during the next quarter as it has during the last one the greatest part of the church is going to be corrupted by it. Brethren, we are drifting." 15

The church has long been under the impression that buildings, well-educated preachers and large budgets would assure growth through outreach to the lost. All we have to do is look at the churches and see that the humble work of reaching out to sinners is too much of a lowly task for professional preachers.

In 1943, Otto Foster spoke about the conduct of a gospel preacher, and in this connection he referred to the pastor system and gave a quotation from an article by C.M. Pullias. It is as follows:

"The growing tendency to the pastor system by the churches of Christ is alarming. We preach against it and at the same time practice it. The preachers are being called in by the large churches to preach exclusively for them. The larger a congregation, the more helpless it is. They have reached the point where the preacher is not allowed to evangelize the world in holding revival meetings where they are needed. The churches are not able to have prayer meetings unless the preacher is there. As a result the churches are perishing. Large congregations are the burying grounds for talent. The larger they are, the more and more is this true. The members of the churches are to trust to the preacher everything. They feel they pay him to do it, and they, therefore, are relieved of any responsibility in leading or conducting the services. A few more decades and the church of Christ will not favor itself - if changes are not made soon. Besides, the preacher in such cases is not appreciated for his strong and scriptural preaching, but for his little pastoral visits, good mixing, and organizing."16

The following statement by Rurel Lemmons was made on the front page of the *Firm Foundation* of April 14, 1964, lamenting the results of what we have done:

"Thus the congregation is spoon-fed for years and never learned to feed itself. The fact is that we are delivering babies who never intend to graduate, enlisting soldiers who never intend to fight, and registering racers who never intend to race. Our motto has become, "There he is, Lord; send him!!" The Ship of Zion is no longer manned by a volunteer crew working for sheer love of the captain, but is steered by a pilot and assistant pilot, while the remainder are paying passengers who are going along for the ride and complaining as they go. Many congregations are

made up of half-converted individuals who think that when Jesus said we were to be child-like, he meant 'childish,' and they have to be petted and pampered to even keep them coming, much less minister to others."

I believe that if our schools had trained preachers to be truly New Testament evangelists, and if they had trained members like Ephesians 4:11,12 teaches, the church would have been several million strong today.

In 1943, Roy H. Lanier, Sr., spoke concerning the pastoral work of a local church. He called attention to the fact that some busy elders allowed much of their work to be taken over by the full-time preacher in the local church. He declared: "The fact that these conditions exist is proof that our present trend is definitely toward the one-man pastor system. I do not believe preachers are to be blamed for being the pastors of the churches. In many places they have found the elders incapable of doing the work, and in other places they were not financially able to take the time to do their work. So rather than see the work go undone, the preachers have done it for the elders. We have tried to justify ourselves in this by saying the elders are having the work done, overseeing it; doing the work by proxy. If the preacher takes this position, he has compromised the truth. A failure to evangelize cannot be justified."

The preacher should study carefully how Jesus trained the twelve. A lengthy chapter in the book **Church Growth Today** by this writer explains how this can be done. See chapter four. A.B. Bruce's **The Training of the Twelve** is also a good work.

During the Abilene lectures in 1964, LeMoine G. Lewis spoke concerning training young men to preach as follows: "One

of the most important things our Lord did during the brief stay on the earth was to train a small band of preachers — the Twelve and the Seventy. I doubt that anything the Apostle Paul did was of greater consequence than his training of the young preachers, Titus and Timothy. The most important work in all the world is the work of preaching the gospel of our Lord." The preacher should be concerned about multiplying himself in every possible way — classes for training soul winners, inspiring men to be evangelist, etc. If not, the spirit and purpose of his work has been lost.

In 1978, at the Freed-Hardeman lectures, Ralph T. Henley referred to the divisions that have come to churches of Christ. He listed the non-located preacher concept as one of the issues. He called attention to the problems of the located preacher and the fact that only a few "outsiders" ever attend the services of the church. He stated: "Preachers preach to the same group week after week, and after two to five years they swap places to preach the same things to the same kind of audience. Another preacher arrives with great expectations to repeat the process. The minister thus becomes the performer and the congregation the spectators. This is a sad and true bit of American church history. May God help us to change direction."

Today we have many fine church buildings, men trained as pastors but do not know how to produce an evangelistic church; the finest of literature, but it will not reproduce the church. Batsel Baxter called this the "crises of ineffectiveness". One elder told me that it had been twelve years since his congregation had received any teaching on evangelism. It is evangelism that we must recapture!

### It Didn't Have to Be that Way

While we have focused on the problem of the preacher serving largely as pastor, I am grateful for the many preachers who have a real passion for lost souls and are very committed to doing the work of an evangelist.

One authoritative study shows that a preacher whose interest focuses more on unevangelistic activities is least effective in building a church.

### A 10 year study showed the following:

- A preacher whose major focus was on administrative activities and attending meetings saw his congregation reach a plateau of non-growth.
- A preacher whose major focus was on counseling and visiting members saw his congregation decline.
- A preacher whose major focus was on sermon preparation and study saw his congregation reach a plateau of non-growth.
- A preacher whose major focus was on visiting prospective members and training members saw his congregation grow.

### Evangelists in the Early Church

In 1988, Earl Lavender, Ph.D., in his book, A Biblical Pattern For Church Growth, based on the book of Ephesians, has given us an insight into the New Testament pattern for an evangelist. He is a former missionary to Italy. This book is now out of print. He writes:

"The work of an evangelist was crucial in the early church.

Evangelists spent their lives planting the seed of God's word in the hearts of people everywhere. They started new congregations and led them until qualified teaching pastors (elders) were appointed.

"Much attention has been given to the rarity of the word 'evangelist' in the New Testament. It does not appear in the list of ministries of 1 Corinthians 12 and is found in only two other places in the Bible (2 Timothy 4:5; Acts 21:8). However, the verb form 'to evangelize' or 'preach the Gospel' appears frequently (55 times in the New Testament).

"Apostles and prophets served during the foundational period of the church but were not perpetuated beyond that era. However, evangelists and teaching pastors were intended to be permanent leadership ministries in the church. Do we have 'evangelists' in the church today? Do we have those with beautiful 'feet' in the Lord's sight?

"If we consider the work of an evangelist as identified in the Scriptures, we have far too few. One might ask, 'But we have many preachers — how can you say we have few evangelists?' The problem is that in today's church, 'preacher' and 'evangelist' are not often synonymous. As Jack Lewis points out: "The modern preacher who devotes his energies to church administration, to counseling, to preaching sermons to people, most of whom have already obeyed the Gospel, has no close parallel in the church of the first century" (Leadership Questions Confronting the Church, page 49).

"This is not to say that having 'located preachers' is wrong. But consider how little the average modern-day preacher resembles the evangelists of the early church. This brings us to the heart of the matter. I am convinced that one of the main reasons the church is not growing numerically or spiritually as it should is that many congregations spend a great amount of their resources supporting one man who is filling a leadership position that did not exist in the New Testament church. Most of our preachers never get the chance to preach, if we define 'preach' as do the Scriptures. Instead, they are called on to fulfill pastoral responsibilities.

"Though we refuse to call our preachers 'pastors', in many cases that is exactly what we expect them to do. I have talked to many preachers who have expressed their frustration with such demands. Some are now used car and insurance salesmen as a result. When I hear what they had to do to meet their congregation's expectations, I marvel that they made it as long as they did! They were (and are) expected to fill the pulpit, visit the sick and shut-ins, counsel the troubled, guide the flock — giving special attention to the youth, give funeral messages, perform marriages, be on call around the clock, and if there is any time left, they are to lead some kind of personal-work program.

"Just because we call a man a 'preacher' does not make him a preacher. What makes one an evangelist or preacher is that his primary responsibility is the proclamation of the word of God to the lost! If we expect him to do the work of a pastor (elder), he is a pastor whether we call him one or not. How far we have strayed from the biblical pattern of leadership when we require a young man just out of college to assume pastoring responsibilities! The burden is too great for one who is relatively young in the faith, without the benefit of wisdom that only years of godly living can produce (cf. 1 Timothy 3:6).

"I certainly do not wish to offend in any way the countless

good men who have given their lives to the Lord as 'preachers'. I would never want to take away the value of what they have done in teaching Christians more about our Savior and how to live the Christian life. But as I intently study the Scriptures, looking for the pattern of leadership in the early church that cause its tremendous growth, I find no trace of the position of 'pulpit preacher'.

"The very title 'pulpit preacher' indicates why the church is not reaching the lost as God would desire.

"Consider with me the meaning of 'preach' given in the Scriptures. Two main words in the Greek which are translated 'to preach' are kerusso (to announce as a herald) and evangelizedthai (to proclaim the Good News). The primary meaning of both in context is to announce the Good News of Jesus to those who have not heard it before.

"As has been previously pointed out, the evangelists of the early church spent most of their energies proclaiming the word of God to the unforgiven. After the lost were converted to Christ their knowledge of the truth was deepened through teaching that was the responsibility of teaching pastors (elders). While evangelists also took part in this type of teaching, especially if the church had not yet appointed elders, it was not their primary responsibility. They most certainly did not spend several days each week in their studies preparing for two sermons to be presented in the presence of the saved during Sunday worship services. The very nature of their ministry insisted they preach the Good News to those without a Savior.

"When pulpit preaching is mainly evangelistic, worship in and of itself is seen to meet every minimum spiritual requirement. The church is confined to a building — after all, that is where the message of salvation is proclaimed; that is where one responds to the invitation song; that is where one is baptized. The work of the church is neatly packaged in three 'appointed' times during the week.

"However, it is not preaching in light of the biblical definition. It is teaching. We need it. But the world outside our assemblies desperately needs preaching in the true sense of the word! One who stands before the saved and clearly expounds upon the word of God is a teacher, not an evangelist.

"Many congregations take great pride in the wonderful preacher who fills the pulpit. But the work of the church does not end there. The Gospel must be announced to the unsaved or we are not the church that Jesus Christ purchased with His blood! 'And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ...praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved' (Acts 5:42; 2:47 NKJV)."

It is doubtful that congregations in the early church had pulpit preaching as we do today. Pulpit preachers are not mentioned.

### Conclusion

Our schools must begin training evangelists.

Our preachers will have to dedicate themselves to learning how to evangelize through study and practical experience. Begin with Otis Gatewood's book **You Can Do Personal Work**. I suggest you use terms like "soul winning", "outreach" and "personal evangelism" instead of personal work. Also see chapter 14 in my book Church Growth Today on "Re-evaluating the Work of the Preacher in Light of Scripture." Available through your bookstore.

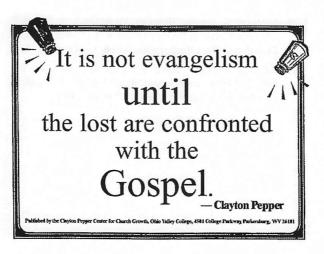
For further information write to the Clayton Pepper Center for Church Growth, 1 Campus View Drive, Vienna, WV 26105-8000 or call Jerry Dyer, Director, 1-800-678-6780.

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#### Chapter 8

# Campaigns and Evangelistic Gospel Meetings

It appears that campaigns were the outgrowth of more interest in outreach to the lost, beginning in the 50's. Ivan Stewart was one of the early leaders of campaigns. He said in an article in 1966 that personal evangelism twenty years before was relatively unknown.

The word campaign is taken from a military endeavor, which infers that armies made an aggressive effort to defeat the enemy.

Webster's New International Dictionary defines campaigns as, (1) "A connected series of military operations forming a distinct state in a war; (2) a connected series of operations to bring about some desired result; as, an advertising campaign."

Campaigns for Christ involved a more aggressive effort to reach the lost. It is a serious return to using the members to go into the community to teach the lost. This is combined with an evangelistic gospel meeting intended to help harvest the souls that were taught in days prior and during the campaign meeting. No doubt the term "campaign" has been used in a variety of ways. The most effective campaigns always include going into the highways and byways to teach the lost.

This has been proven effective. One preacher told of a man who won more to Christ through personal teaching than was won through the campaign meeting.

Campaign practices are based more on the New Testament principle of teaching one on one and from house to house. Many public meetings have been held over the years that have not included an aggressive plan for outreach to the lost. Study the following passages about evangelistic work of the early church.

#### Their goal was:

- 1. To reach every creature (Mark 16:15).
- 2. They taught publicly and from house to house (Acts 5:42; 2:47; 20:20).
- 3. Every Christian was privileged and commanded to share

his faith (Acts 8:4; 2 Timothy 2:2,24; Hebrews 5:12; Matthew 25:14-30; Colossians 1:23).

#### 4. The church grew (Acts 4:4).

With the decline of evangelistic zeal in the 70's and 80's, campaigns almost ceased. Bible reading and prayer were removed from public schools in 1962 and 1963 and our nation became more materialistic and less interested in spiritual things. People did not have time to come to campaign meetings. Church and Bible school attendance began to plateau in 1965. Between 1970 and 1980 church school attendance in America dropped by 8 million and by 1990, 80% to 85% of all churches in America were at a plateau or declining. Churches became discouraged and for the most part lost the will to evangelize.

Campaigns bring the nearest thing to New Testament evangelism that I have seen in the present age (cf. Acts 5:42). No matter what we do, it is not evangelism until the lost are confronted with the gospel! Evangelism and church growth begin with the knowledge of the subject and end with a loss of evangelistic zeal! The revival of campaigns for Christ are contingent on a revival of evangelistic zeal!

#### Campaigns Still Can Produce Good Results

Campaigns, if conducted properly, still can produce great results. As I write this, the most effective campaigns conducted on a regular basis are the "We Care" campaigns led by Larry West of West Monroe, Louisiana. Brother Eddie Lawson of Hackelberg, Alabama, also conducts similar campaigns and there may be others of which this writer is not aware. I personally have been on a number of these campaigns. They have approximate-

ly 100 people from various parts of the country who drive from their homes to help. Some of the campaigns are with one congregation and some are with a group of congregations.

Once a decision is made, a full year's preparation begins. It involves organization under the direction of "We Care" ministries. "We Care" has an operations manual that sets out the details. You may write "We Care" at 3201 North Seventh Street, West Monroe, Louisiana, 71291.

The larger campaigns involve radio, billboards, newspaper and television spots. The campaign training includes one week, whereby "We Care" workers do field training with certain members, and they in turn train others for about three months before the actual campaign begins. Campaigns last about one week to ten days. The preaching service is usually at a location other than the church building. The community is made aware of the campaign through mass media and knows when the campaign starts. The host church will supply all the meals at the building and several members open their homes to the campaigners from out of town. Workers with motor homes are provided with hook-ups.

As many of the local people are involved as possible. They prefer to work in threes with at least one woman on the team and one local person. One of the three will be designated as a spokesperson at the door, and this is rotated among the three. The three are introduced by first names only (name tags are used). This person will introduce the three and say, "We are from the \_\_\_\_\_ church of Christ and are working in the 'We Care' campaign. We are trying to get our religion out of the building. I wonder if you have anyone sick who might like to have us pray for them?" Most will not. Then they ask, "Do you know of someone in the hospital who might like to have us visit them?"

If they do, the visit is made that same day. They ask, "I wonder if you might know of someone who is out of work and needs groceries?" If they do, they take them a bag of groceries. Several bags of groceries will be at the building for this purpose. The final statement and question is, "We are interested in the spiritual welfare of the people of our community. I would like to ask you this question, 'If the Lord were to come today, do you know for sure, nothing doubting, that you would go home to be with the Lord?" This is not an offensive question and will get you immediately to the point. Some will say that they do not know. The worker responds, "The Bible says you can know. Do you have time for us to talk about this?" If they do not have time, a time is scheduled for later. If the person says, "Yes, I do have that hope." The worker responds, "That is wonderful; could you share what you did with me?" If the person has the time the worker goes into the house and listens to what the prospect says. Then says, "That is not what I did. May I share with you what I did?" Workers should be trained in handling the situation at the door.

Pre-campaign preparation will include how to teach a home Bible study as well as how to teach new Christians (see the "We Care" manual).

#### A Campaign that Involved 76 Congregations!

One congregation can sponsor a campaign or it can be a group of congregations. One campaign involved 76 congregations. It happened in Nashville, Tennessee. The Great Commission School in Nashville opened each fall with a five-day series of lessons on outreach. There was a 30-minute keynote speech and devotional, then several one-hour classes. One

keynote dealt with the subject, "The Possibility of a Davidson County Campaign for Christ." Then there was a class period devoted to how this might be done by three different teachers. This writer was one of them. The overwhelming conclusion was positive. However, this was not the final decision. Four fact-finding committees were appointed, led by qualified men with a strong background in evangelism. The county was divided into four areas. Each committee was to arrange meetings with representatives from as many of the congregations as possible, explaining to them how this might be done. The response was favorable. A combined meeting was then planned for the key people with a respected speaker chosen to speak in favor of the campaign. About four respected elders were asked to take a few minutes and speak in favor of the campaign. The conclusion of the meeting was positive.

An evangelistic eldership agreed to oversee the campaign. The writer was selected to be chairman of the steering committee and several qualified men with reputations for being evangelistic were asked to serve on the steering committee. All four areas of the county were represented. The planning was done in 1974, with the campaign to be a year-long effort in 1975. While a master plan was recommended for the church to plug into, each congregation was free to adopt the plan or adapt it to suit their congregation. The plan was to prepare the church and then prepare the community. The goal was to reach every teachable person. One of the brethren was the manager of a television station. He recommended a master advertising plan. He then suggested that two agencies be asked to submit an advertising plan involving newspaper, radio, television and bumper stickers.

The advertising agency selected suggested that a survey of

400 households be done to determine the community's attitude toward the church of Christ. With the help of the steering committee the agency completed the questionnaire and the phone calls were made. Twenty-eight percent showed prejudice toward the church. The conclusion was that the advertising would have to be low key.

#### Preparing the Community

Since it is generally agreed that radio, television, newspapers, and billboards comprise the most effective means of mass media and since there is an admission that most of the brethren actually involved in the campaign knew very little about the effective use of mass media, it was without question that professional help should be used in our campaign. Therefore, the very best agency to implement our ideas was employed. Without a doubt this was one of the wisest moves of the entire effort.

The budget for the campaign was \$148,000 with the bulk of this spent in mass media. One of the effective tools in our mass media was the 20-page magazine. More than 180,000 copies of the magazine were produced and distributed in the campaign. The magazine was designed to be an attractive evangelistic tool and given out by the religious survey workers. For more information see the first quarter issue of 1976 Personal Evangelism Magazine.

#### Preparing the Church

Campaign plans were made in the fall of 1974. The first objective in 1975 would be to prepare the church. The plan was not only to prepare for the campaign, but also hopefully launch the church into an evangelistic mode for years to come.

It was recommended that all adult classes study in the first quarter a course that sharpens the focus toward reaching the lost. Suggested books are:

- Building an Evangelistic Church Through Total Evangelism, compiled by Clayton Pepper.
- The Christian and His Influence, by Wendell Winkler. The teacher must be well oriented toward evangelism.
- "The Master Guide for Developing a Growing Church", in Church Growth Today, by Clayton Pepper. Quality Publishing, in Abilene, Texas, publishes this 244-page book.

The second quarter's study should be on how to win souls. One possible course of study is Introduction to Soul Winning, by Clayton Pepper. Other materials should be considered. I do not recommend that all the church be taught this course; only those who have been motivated by the previous quarter's course. Use a sign-up sheet toward the end of the quarter for the next class. I would also recommend that the elders hand-pick certain people whom they would like to have trained to win souls for the class. The elders may call, visit or write, telling them that the elders would like for them to take the course. This will leave behind several people, perhaps the majority. Use Jerry Dyer's book, Keeping Converts and Restoring the Erring. It is hoped that from this class would come workers for teaching new Christians and delinquent members. Keep in mind that some in this class are probably in need of restoration.

We recommend that as the church learns how to be more effective within their particular congregations they will proceed with implementation of these things. Remember this campaign

should launch the congregation into a year-round program of outreach. There should be long-range benefits from the campaign. Keep in mind that your Soul Winning class should be continued for a long time. Classes in the most successful soul winning programs that I have directed lasted the full length of time that I was the director — three years. There were 223 baptisms and restorations. Most were baptisms.

The Nashville Campaign involved using young people for a telephone survey, offering literature and Bible correspondence courses. The person they called was asked if there were some Bible subjects on which they would like to have information. There was an area-wide director and each participating congregation had a director of the youth program. They had to be trained. This was to occur in April and May.

In the year-long campaign that we had in Nashville, plans called for training workers to identify teaching opportunities through a religious survey during the month of July with the actual survey to be done in August. It would continue until finished. Gospel meeting week was scheduled to begin October 5th. The survey was expected to produce studies which in turn would produce prospects for conversion and who would attend the gospel meeting.

#### Help Congregations Prepare

Knowing the importance of leadership in all facets of the campaign, a three-month training program was implemented on Monday nights during March, April, and May. Well-qualified men taught classes on:

 Campaign leadership. Congregations were asked to select three men from their congregation to attend.

- Youth leadership. Each congregation was asked to select a youth leader to lead the young people in the campaign.
- 3. Adult Soul Winning class.
- Adult class on how to follow up new Christians and restore the erring.
- 5. Teenage soul winning.

Attendance exceeded 1,000 on several occasions.

# Why Take a Religious Survey of the Community?

- 1. To find those who are religiously unattached.
- 2. To reach those who do not attend religious services.
- To find and restore negligent and fallen-away members of the church.
- To find members who have moved into the community, but have not identified with a local congregation.
- To keep informed about the spiritual, mental, physical, material and moral climate of the community.
- To enroll children in Bible School and locate riders for the bus ministry.
- To cause members to be more conscious of their responsibility to the lost and provide opportunities for teaching them.
- 8. To keep the community aware of the church's desire to be helpful.

Chapter 14 of the book, Church Growth Today, is in the campaign file at Bear Valley Bible Institute. Forms with dialogue are also in the file. Much of the details for a campaign is in this chapter entitled, "Identifying Teaching Opportunities Through a Religious Survey."

#### Campaign For Christ Religious Survey Information Card

Name	Not at Home	
Addres	ess Refused Interview	
Phone	Not Interested	
Person	n Interviewed: Husband ( ) Wife ( ) Others	
1.	We are conducting a religious survey in the Perhaps you have seen or heard some of the aments about the Campaign Survey of the things we are interested in is finding outcentages of Catholics, Protestants and Jewish who live in our community. Which a Catholic () Protestant () Jewish () Other	advertise- vey. One t the per- families are you?
2.	Do you have a Bible in your home? Yes ( ) No	0()
3.	Do you believe the Bible to be inspired by God? Yes ( ) No ( )	
4.	Do you believe that the influence of the Bible has helped give America freedom and prosperity? Yes ( ) No ( )	
5.	With what church are you best acquainted? Husband Member? Yes ( ) No ( ) Wife Member? Yes ( ) No ( )	

6.	Do you attend church services? Seldom ( ) Never ( ) Special Occasions ( ) Weekly ( ) More than once a week ( )
7.	Do you have children living at home? Yes ( ) No ( ) List names and ages:  Name Age Name Age Name Age Name Age
8.	Do they attend a religious training program (Sunday School, Catechism, etc.)? Yes ( ) No ( )
9.	Do you feel a more personal relationship with Jesus would make you happier? Yes ( ) No ( )
10.	What if the Lord were to come right now? Would you know for sure, nothing doubting, that you would go to heaven? Yes () No ()
11.	Do you find parts of the Bible hard to understand? Yes ( ) No ( )
	Services Offered to the Community
12	. Various types of services are available to members of the community. For example, a visualized Bible Survey using color filmstrips. Do you believe your family would benefit from seeing these Bible films? Yes () No () Date to begin showing Time AM () PM () Call back for appointment in person () Telephone () When?
13	. If a home Bible study with the visualized Survey Films cannot be arranged, offer Bible Correspondence courses Describe and show first lesson. Enroll in Bible Correspondence: Yes () No () Gave first lesson (Will mail first lesson ()

	<ol> <li>Describe congregational Bible Study Classes. List the</li> </ol>
	names of children who will attend
	Transportation needed: Yes ( ) No ( ) Family will brin or send ( )
Na	nes of workers Date

#### Results of the campaign

The week of October 5th all participating congregations held a Gospel Meeting. There were 634 responses that week.

#### Some Results from Reporting Congregations

Responses the Year Before Campaign	Responses the Year of Campaign
42	127
85	116
38	129
88	183
15	47
90	311
64	105
23	113

Not all congregations reported on campaign results.

#### "Evangelistic Gospel Meeting"

In many ways campaigns and gospel meetings are similar. Many campaign principles are applicable to gospel meetings.

The best information that I have been able to obtain comes from the 60's. Two of the most noted speakers were W.A. Bradfield of Freed-Hardeman College and Willard Collins of David Lipscomb College (both of these institutions are now universities). Brother Bradfield is now deceased.

Brother Bradfield said, "I am of the strong persuasion that the greatest thing in regards to the success of a gospel meeting is the spiritual temperature of the local congregation. If the local church is on fire, then we are likely to have a good meeting. The visiting evangelist, his personality, dedication, knowledge of the Word of God is important, and of course the message itself, the Gospel, is indeed the power of God to salvation." He further stated that a church would do well to start a personal evangelism program three months in advance, if it does not have one. It should also work to build up its Bible School attendance. He suggested conducting a house-to-house campaign, prepare a detailed list of prospects eleven years of age and up as well as erring members. Brother Bradfield also believed there should be daily personal evangelism during the course of the gospel meeting.

He diligently worked with brethren in his meetings to reach the lost in the community. He once wrote, "Where I preached in 1964 there were 1,140 responses to the Gospel invitation." This included 423 baptisms, 709 restorations, and 8 placed membership. A large number of those baptized, especially the adults, were contacted privately. Many were baptized at "off hours". A good number of those restored were also contacted personally.

#### Here Are 24 Suggestions that Brother Bradfield Has Made

#### Things Individual Christians Can Do

- Give ten friends a special personal invitation the week before the meeting begins.
- 2. Urge delinquent members and prospects to come.
- 3. Make five telephone calls each day of the meeting.
- Bring children and young people to the special class each night.
- 5. Use car and/or bus to bring visitors to the meeting.
- 6. Try hard to lead two souls to Christ during the meeting.
- 7. Pray for the meeting every day; work for its success.
- 8. Attend every service, meet every visitor, sing every song.

#### Advertising and Promotion

- Mail announcement of meeting dates to sister congregations at least one month in advance.
- 2. Make posters for each Bible classroom.
- 3. Distribute announcements and tracts throughout the community house to house.
- Mail second announcement to sister congregations asking them to post on bulletin boards, announce in the bulletin, from the pulpit, etc.
- 5. Place large signs in front of building.
- 6. Run announcements in newspaper.

- Have announcements made on church radio and television programs.
- 8. Place posters in stores of the community.
- Let each family be responsible for filling one pew each night.
- Announce and publicize the meeting in the local bulletin several weeks in advance.
- 11. Run "Special Issue" of bulletin just before meeting starts.
- Have a good supply of tracts on hand for use before and during the meeting.
- Set up goals for meeting and keep record of attendance at each service.
- Have repeat announcement at mid-week service of sister congregations during the meeting.
- Check on members who are not attending the meeting and find out why.
- Use bumper stickers on every car in the congregation if possible.

# Willard Collins a Highly Effective Gospel Meeting Speaker!

From 1955 to 1963 Willard Collins conducted 139 meetings. There were 1,787 baptisms, 1,109 restorations, and 184 placed membership, for a total of 3,080 responding. That was an average of 22 responses per meeting. In 1985 he said the number of persons having responded to the invitation since he began

preaching in 1935 was over 12,000 with some 7,000 being baptized. In the first quarter edition of *Church Growth* magazine in 1986 he set forth some of his recommendations for a successful gospel meeting. (This is in the files at Bear Valley School.)

Willard Collins follows the practice of sending somewhat of a form letter to the congregation before his arrival there. He hopes by this to get them further involved in the meeting. Following is a copy of the letter he sends:

- I would like to meet the young people in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades for a special lesson at the Sunday school hour on the first Sunday of the meeting. I would like to have a blackboard in the room where the class meets, if this is possible. I find that I can do a great deal of good if this can be worked out.
- I would like to meet the young people in the ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades in another class on the second Sunday of the meeting at the Bible study hour. I will need the blackboard in this room, if it is possible.
- 3. I would like to conduct a class for young people, preschool through the twelfth grade, fifteen minutes before church each night beginning Sunday night. I will have two classes in operation at the same time with the aisle separating the classes. I would like to meet this class in the main auditorium. I want the fifth graders down through pre-school on one side of the aisle, and the sixth grade through the twelfth grade on the other. We have an attendance contest each night, and in this way generate a great deal of enthusiasm.
- 4. I would like to eat only one meal out each day. I prefer

the noon meal, if possible. I find I do a much better job preaching if I do not eat a big meal just before the sermon. I am sure you understand this. I want to be in homes that really want me, because I like to be with the people. I do not mind going out a few nights after church to be in the homes that cannot arrange to have me for lunch. After church, we just like light refreshments, but we do enjoy such fellowship.

5. Could you send me a list of the 20 most favorable prospects for baptism or restoration, with the proper notation after each. These can come from your Bible school, divided families or the prospect list kept by the preacher. I want to meet these people during the meeting if at all possible, and will be glad to go around some in the afternoon where the people work or to the homes to meet and know them. I find that Saturday afternoon of the meeting is often a good time to make these calls, if someone can go with me and show me the streets and addresses.

Suggestions from brothers Bradfield and Collins come from the book, **Reviving the Gospel Meeting**, by Jim Bill McInteer, published about 1967.

Conclusion: These procedures have been assembled with the hope that more souls will be brought to Christ.

Materials on campaigns and gospel meetings are in the file at Bear Valley Bible Institute.

 Chapter 14 of the book Church Growth Today entitled "Identifying Teaching Opportunities Through a Religious Survey."

- 2. "We Care" manual.
- 3. Special issue of *Church Growth Evangelism* magazine on gospel meetings.
- Special issue of Church Growth magazine on Willard Collins. One of the articles is entitled, "Insights into His Success as a Gospel Meeting Preacher."
- Special issue of Church Growth magazine on "We Care" campaigns.
- 6. Special issue of *Personal Evangelism* magazine on the "Let Freedom Ring Campaign" in Nashville.
- Special issue of *Personal Evangelism* magazine emphasizing religious survey work (4th Quarter, 1966).
- Special issue of *Personal Evangelism* magazine on effective campaigns which contains many valuable suggestions (October 1, 1968).
- James E. Jones' article entitled, "Rediscovering the Excitement of the Old Time Gospel Meetings" (Bear Valley School file).

#### Chapter 9

### The Revival of a Church

This story began long ago — much longer, in fact, than I can go back. But it is the true story of the Lord's church in the small town of Hackleburg, Alabama. It used to be a church of some 170 strong, but then came hard times. Over a period of seven years the church dwindled and died until only some 50 were left.

This was truly a church much like the one in Ephesus that is described in Revelation 2 — it had left its first love. Like the church in Sardis, it had the name of being alive, but was dead. They were "keeping house for the Lord" and going through the motions, but not much else. Then came a new preacher and his wife and with them renewed hope, for it seemed that the very hand of God had led them there. It was the first of August.

In the weeks to follow, Jesus was lifted up. Hope was renewed. Belief was revived and restored in the power of the gospel to save souls. Plans were soon made for a campaign which included both door knocking and a gospel meeting. In November prayer meetings for the church and the campaign were begun. Sometimes these special meetings were in members' homes and sometimes in the church building, but they were always at times other than regularly scheduled services. The prayer meetings were simple; each man who desired to do so led a prayer, usually followed by a song. The prayers were specific. They asked God to open doors and open hearts of the lost; to guide them to the lost and give them the opportunity to share the gospel with them. They asked God for revival among themselves. They asked God to fill them with a passion for Him and

for the lost and for one another. The campaign was six months away when they started the prayer meetings. Almost immediately the church began to come together. Hearts were joined in prayer. Word spread quickly that things were changing.

November and December passed quickly and it was only three and a half months until the campaign. Much planning was done. Housing was arranged to accommodate some 20 out-of-town workers who were coming to help. Meals were planned. Maps were marked for door knocking. By the time March arrived, special prayer meetings were held each week. These times were becoming more and more special.

Two evangelism classes were started the first of the year to train people both how to and who to teach. One was on Sunday morning and the other on Wednesday night. An atmosphere of expectancy was forming. Doubt had turned to optimism. God was already answering prayers. Then on the last Wednesday night in March, at the conclusion of the regular services, the invitation was extended as usual. Responses were almost unheard of, especially on Wednesday nights, but this night was different. One of the best Christian ladies anywhere stepped out and walked down the aisle. She came confessing her sins. She said she did not want to lose her soul for sins of omission. She wanted to become a soul-winner. Sunday morning, Sunday night and the next Wednesday night there were more responses.

Finally the time came for the campaign to officially begin. But, actually, it had already begun long before. There were more responses that Sunday morning and that night. The prayer meetings and the campaign had produced an atmosphere conducive for repentance and restoration. God was giving a revival! The gospel meeting started on Wednesday night and continued

through Sunday. There were responses at almost every service. One couple who had been away from the Lord and His church, who had been visited, came to meet with the church one afternoon. They came to come home. Everyone joined hands and hearts in prayer. Tears were shed. Welcome home, brother and sister! There were baptisms after services at night. Sunday morning there were seven more coming in repentance, and a couple who had been studied with during the week walked down the aisle to give Christ their lives and sins in obedience to the gospel. There were two more baptized Sunday night. By the time the week was over all lives were forever changed. God was at work. He was answering prayers, only far greater than anyone had dared to dream or ask. There had been 48 coming in repentance and restoration, some had been gone for years, while others had been coming to the building but that was about all. Six had obeyed the gospel of Christ and there were some 125 contacts to follow up. Almost 900 doors were knocked on that week.

There will be many more conversions from the follow up. In nine months the church has much more than doubled in numbers. But much more importantly, this church that was dead is alive again. It has repented and turned to God and God has given revival and restoration. This is now truly a church of one heart and spirit. They look forward to each service. New people are at almost each one. Members are going with one another during the week following up on these contacts.

What has happened here can happen where you are. Isn't it time for us to have real revival among us? One lady opened the door and led the way here. Why can't you be the one in the church where you are to lead others?

By Eddie Lawson, Evangelist



# Evangelism is the last thing We Start and the first thing we



Stop. \_\_Clayton Pepper

Chapter 10

# Preachers in Dying Churches: Evangelist or Priests?

Jerry W. Carmichael

Introduction

Churches often die because the preacher is not an evangelist.

He never instructs or encourages the congregation in evangelism. This writer is constantly amazed at the lack of training in soulwinning given to and received from many preachers. It is not uncommon in soul-saving efforts such as door-knocking campaigns for the local preacher to completely abstain from the effort! On one such campaign in 2000, this writer witnessed the local preacher refusing to go with the members and the visiting campaigners to canvass the neighborhood around the church building. He "hid out" in his office citing "preacher duties" as being more important than saving the souls of his neighbors! One Kentucky preacher lived in the same neighborhood for ten years and never spoke to his next-door neighbors about their souls. When another preacher moved in and met the neighbors he learned that they were unfaithful Christians. He studied with them and they were restored. The husband now serves as an elder in the church! The question must be asked, "If preachers are not involved in soul-winning, what are they doing!?"

Several years ago this writer was called upon to study with a relative of one of our members. This relative lived about fifty miles away in another town. After the study the relative asked to be baptized. Rather than make the fifty-mile trip back to our home congregation, the decision was made to contact the local church of Christ and ask to use their baptistry. An elderly gentleman answered the phone and was asked about the baptistry. "It doesn't have any water in it," he replied. "I'm not even sure it holds water anymore," he continued. "We haven't used the thing in years," he concluded.

This attitude may be the exception and not the rule in the Lord's church, but the fact that it exists at all is cause for alarm!

#### **Priestly Duties**

Preachers who are not soul-winners are not a great deal different from the priests and pastors so often found in the denominations. Their jobs are very much alike.

Some of the duties of the Catholic priest include: Ministering to the sick; encouraging the faithful to celebrate the sacrament of penance; baptizing; presiding over the eucharist; celebrating mass; pre-marital counseling; presiding at funerals; hearing confessions, performing marriage ceremonies; attending meetings with other priests; studying theology manuals and Canon laws; assigning penance to those who have confessed sins; and leading the Mass. The priest is the chief administrator of the local congregation. His daily duties are not unlike the office manager or CEO of many businesses.

Perhaps the most alarming fact about the duties of Catholic priests is their position on evangelism. The following quote from Gerry Fleck's book, If You Are A Catholic, sums it up well: "A Roman Catholic Priest takes a vow at his ordination that he will not go out and try to persuade people to become Catholic. If they come to him, he can teach them the Catholic faith."

Not only is evangelism seen as unnecessary in the Catholic church; it is forbidden for the priest to engage in it!

The job for the priest is just that, a job! It carries with it security. He is seldom called into account for his actions. He is guaranteed a salary, a place to live and a comfortable retirement. He is given free health care for as long as he lives. The spiritual health of the congregation is not his concern.

#### The Professional Preacher

The duties of today's professional preacher in the Lord's church are remarkably similar to the above-described duties of the Catholic priest.

The priest is expected to minister to the sick in his congregation. It is a rare congregation indeed which does not expect the preacher to be the first at the bedside of all ailing members. This often interferes with the preparation of his sermons, Bible classes and Bible study sessions with non-Christians. As Christians we should all be concerned with ailing members, but never to the point of denying the lost their opportunity to be cleansed by the blood of Christ. Jesus taught that the spiritually sick must take precedence over those who are already saved. "When Jesus heard that, He said to them. Those who were well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matthew 9:12). "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?" (Matthew 18:12). The Bible clearly teaches that ministering to the physically sick members of the church is primarily the job of the elders. "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14). Let us ever encourage elders and other members of the Lord's church to visit the sick and encourage them. Let us teach the congregations that the primary responsibility of the preacher is to "seek and save the lost".

Other duties of the priest include pre-marital counseling and presiding over weddings and funerals. While all of these can be used as evangelistic opportunities, they can also interfere with the soul-saving efforts of a local preacher by encroaching upon time that he could use to teach the lost.

The priest also spends time in studying Theology manuals and Canon law books. He is far more concerned with what other church leaders are writing than what God has written in His word. One priest was asked by this writer about the Bible classes he had taken while being taught to be a priest, to which he replied, "I had no Bible classes. Bible was an elective and I chose not to take it!"

While the faithful preacher of God's word must spend adequate time in earnest study of that word, it is not necessary for him to know everything that has ever been written about that word. It has become increasingly popular in some segments of the church for preachers to know everything that is being written and spoken by our brethren. This is often used to "brand" some brother who does not agree with a certain school of thought. It is a rare occasion for one of this camp to be a soul-winner. He is often too busy keeping up with the brethren to seek and save the lost. It is also often the case that the preacher's study becomes a place to "hide out" from his God-given evangelistic duties. It is thought by some that his study of the word is more important than teaching the lost. The fact is, however, that he must give ample time to each of these worthy endeavors.

Another increasingly common practice is for preachers in the churches of Christ to spend the majority of their "study time" reading and learning from denominational material. When the bulk of that which is studied by a preacher is riddled with false doctrine, it is almost certain to creep into his belief system and eventually into his teaching. Many of our preachers today, especially at the Doctorate level, are trained in the divinity schools of

large secular universities. It is not uncommon for the professors in these schools to hold extremely liberal and sometimes outlandish theological positions. For example: The professor of the New Testament at Vanderbilt University's Divinity School is a Jewish woman. She doesn't believe that Jesus is the Messiah, nor does she believe that the New Testament is inspired, authoritative scripture. One can only imagine what she teaches in her New Testament classes about these writings. It is virtually impossible to keep the teacher's theological leanings out of the theology of the student. Therefore, when they do share what they know with the lost and dying world, the message is perverted and useless to the person asking the question, "What shall I do to be saved?"

Another area where many so-called gospel preachers are like the Catholic priests is in the area of evangelism. The priest swears in a vow not to go out and try to get others to become Catholics. While no modern preacher would submit to such a vow, the actions of many seem to indicate that they believe it just the same! When a preacher sees his position as primarily, "just a job" with benefits, and salary for doing just the minimum, he has traveled very near the path of the Catholic priest.

While many other comparisons could be made between preachers who are not soul-winners and Catholic priests, the ones mentioned here are sufficient for the point being made. God has given us a great commission! "And Jesus came and spoke to them saying, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20). Notice that absent from this com-

mission are the various administrative duties commonly performed by most preachers today. Plainly spoken are the instructions to "Go," "Teach," "Baptize" and "Teach."

Let us pray for church leaders who will allow the minister time to do the job assigned to him by God in His word! Let us pray for schools that will train young preachers to be evangelists instead of priests! Let us ever encourage the sharing of the saving gospel of Jesus with the lost and dying world.

#### Conclusion

The church of Christ is the blood-bought body of the Lord Himself (Acts 20:28)! However, when the church stops winning souls, it becomes just another social organization. When preachers become office managers and administrators, while neglecting soul-saving, they are no different from the above-described priests. This is certainly not the "job description" given in the New Testament. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6). "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2). "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5). "...how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20).

It is high time that we take a close look at the man in the pulpit of the Lord's church. Is he an evangelist or a priest? Please encourage him to be the former and leave the latter to the denominations!!

1 Gerry Fleck, If You Are a Catholic, Self-published, St. Anthony, Indiana.

#### Biographical Information:

Jerry Carmichael was born in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. He was baptized into Christ August 26, 1966. He married the former Jean Baker in 1972; the couple has two daughters, Miranda Carmichael Benson and Beth Carmichael.

Jerry is a graduate of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions and he also earned a Bachelor of Biblical Studies degree from Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver, Scottsboro, Alabama Extension Campus.

Jerry has preached for the following churches of Christ: Elgin, Tennessee; Salyersville, Kentucky; Huntingburg, Indiana; Whitley City, Kentucky. He currently holds the position of Evangelist and Pulpit Minister for the Ivy Point church of Christ in Goodlettsville, Tennessee.

#### Chapter 11

## Reviving Gospel Meetings

#### Roy Beasley

I was baptized at the age of 12, in 1944 during a series of gospel meetings at Fosterville, Tennessee. It was the last night of the meeting and brother Tolbert Kennedy was the preacher. I was the only one to be baptized that year, which was unusual. Usually there would be several responses, but not that year. Many Christians, especially older ones, also obeyed the gospel during the meeting.

A gospel meeting is a protracted or a series of evangelistic meetings where the gospel is preached. Summertime and early fall used to be the traditional times for gospel meetings. We need to understand, though, a difference between a gospel meeting and a "revival". A revival is "reviving" or "reawakening" religious faith. It has to do with a relationship that already exists with God. There are times when we do need "reviving". But a gospel meeting is more than this. It will certainly produce "reviving", but its true nature is *evangelistic*. Its main purpose is to lead sinners to a covenant relationship with God. Gospel meetings have led countless souls to obedience to the gospel and have strengthened the church down through the years.

I get nostalgic thinking back to the gospel meetings we used to have. I remember the warm summer nights. There was no air conditioning except for the cool breezes circulating through the open windows aided by the whish-whish of numerous cardboard fans furnished for advertising by the local funeral home. That

wasn't the only thing that circulated! There were the candle flies, gnats, and mosquitoes! As a preacher, I have swallowed my share of them! Sometimes a gospel meeting would last for two weeks or longer with preaching morning and night. I found an old list of subjects that I used in a meeting years ago when I was young, and there were eighteen of them. I must have preached about all that I knew in those days. And there were the crowds. People would journey for miles to attend a gospel meeting. The seats were full, the children seated around the pulpit, and there would still be folks standing outside or sitting in their automobiles. Nearly always there were responses, several of them. Most country congregations had no baptistry, so we would take them to the nearest water. At night we would drive the cars up close together and turn on the headlights so we could see. As the crowd sang, "Buried With Christ My Redeemer..." or some other appropriate song, the preacher would lead the candidates into the water and one by one plunge them into the watery grave to be raised in newness of life. So many memories.

#### Some Great Meetings of the Bible

God and His people have always had a special "thing" about meeting together. They often came together at the Tabernacle and later the Temple. When the Children of Israel first entered into Canaan's land, they met together at the mountains of Ebal and Gerozo. There is a natural amphitheater on each mountain facing each other. Joshua stood in the middle and proclaimed the law, and the people responded to each section with "Amen." There are many times that we, too, need to assemble and be reminded of God's law.

Again, when the Children of Israel returned from Babylonian

captivity, they began rebuilding the Temple. In Nehemiah 8 we read that they met together and Ezra read the law and gave the "sense", which simply means that he explained it to them. That is the best description of preaching that I know. It is the reading of the word of God and giving the explanation. This often needs to be done publicly lest we forget.

Perhaps the greatest gospel meeting ever held was on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2. The place was the Temple in the city of Jerusalem. The Apostle Peter was the main speaker. The audience was made up of Jews from all over the known world. Peter preached the first gospel sermon in which he announced for the first time publicly the terms of forgiveness. There were 3,000 that obeyed the gospel that day (Acts 2:38f). It was a protracted meeting extending for many days. They continued meeting daily and the Lord kept on adding to the church those who were being saved (Acts 2:42).

#### Other Historic Meetings

Gospel meetings played an important part in the restoration movement. People would travel many miles in wagons, on horse back, and by foot to attend these meetings. Some of the more important meetings were held at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in the early 1800's.

The Hardeman Tabernacle meetings were perhaps some of the greatest meetings to be held in the 20th century. They were conducted in the historic Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee. The preacher was N.B. Hardeman, co-founder of Freed-Hardeman University. The first meeting was held in 1922 and the last in 1942. Great interest was sparked throughout Middle Tennessee and elsewhere. Great crowds attended. Many

of the sermons were published word-for-word in the local newspaper. These meetings did much to encourage and promote great growth of the churches of Christ during the depression years and World War II. The effects of these meetings were felt for many years to come.

Another great meeting was held in October, 1949, at the church of Christ in Old Hickory, Tennessee. Brother Willard Collins was the preacher. There were 111 baptisms and 55 restorations.

#### How to Have a Great Gospel Meeting

How to have a great gospel meeting? Ask the experts!

What made the Old Hickory meeting such a success? First and foremost, the gospel was preached. What then? Ask brother Collins. Writing in the *Gospel Advocate* in April, 1956, the key to its success was preparation. Brother Rufus Clifford was the local preacher. They began two years before the meeting making preparation — two years!

- Two years before the meeting: A three-month course in Personal Evangelism was taught with an average attendance of 478.
- One year before the meeting: A three-month course on "Examples of Conversion" was taught in all classes from the 5th grade up.
- 3. Two months before the meeting: Rufus Clifford preached on "How to do Personal Work" and the Sunday School teachers talked with members of their classes about obeying the gospel.

 Two months before the meeting: Many prospects were visited by members of the congregation who had been trained in the personal work course.

No doubt after this some congregations assumed that all they needed to guarantee a successful meeting was to hire brother Collins or some other well-known preacher. But not so. Brother Collins is well known and has always had the ability to draw a crowd. But only among those who are already Christians. Most non-churched people would not have heard of him. This would not entice them to attend. They would not be reached. Brother Collins stresses that there has to be much prayer and preparation for a truly successful gospel meeting. Preparation must begin early. Much work must be done. There are no short cuts. There is no easy way. For this reason gospel meetings have lost favor. Many congregations no longer sponsor gospel meetings. "Nobody comes," they say! No, not even their own members attend. That's sad! How can we expect non-members to attend, if we don't. I have gone to conduct gospel meetings and even the preacher was not there! He took a vacation! The members are also on vacation! At least they are not to be seen. They let other things interfere with their attendance. I have gone to hold gospel meetings and find out that the only advertising was an announcement the previous Sunday. No preparation. No expectations. I know they had no expectations, for I have looked in their baptistery and found it empty!

One of the great evangelists of the past was M. Norvel Young. He wrote in the April, 1956, issue of the Gospel Advocate that a six-month preparation was imperative for the success of a gospel meeting. His suggestions are just as needful now in planning a gospel meeting as they were then:

- 1. Elders call for a meeting of teachers and suggest to them that they teach special evangelistic lessons.
- 2. Junior High and above should be taught lessons pertaining to the grace of God and the plan of salvation.
- 3. Three months before the meeting an all-out effort should be made to enroll non-members. This is done through the Sunday School students.
- 4. Each class should carry on a visitation program two months before the meeting. A fellowship in someone's home is suggested after the visitation.
- 5. Have prayer meetings in their homes (5th grade up). They are each asked what they expect to do to promote the meetings.
- Set an attendance goal for the day the meeting is to begin. Announcements should be made about the Bible classes the following Sunday. This may encourage visitors to enroll.
- 7. Classes of the pre-school and first six grades should take home special invitations to their parents.
- 8. After the meeting, classes from Junior High and up should stress lessons on Christian growth. Efforts to enroll new students in Bible classes should go on.

#### Everyone Must Be Involved

The visiting preacher is the featured speaker and must strive to do his part. I have seen too many visiting preachers or evangelists taking this time to sight-see or be on vacation. One of the great evangelists of yesteryear was W.A. Bradfield. He was a passionate preacher and a tireless worker. He found out who the prospects were, and he would take the local preacher or someone else along with him and go to see them. He was successful in leading many souls to Christ.

One of the elders of the 7th and Poplar congregation in Murray, Kentucky, years ago was brother J.H. Walston. I had assumed that he and sister Walston had been lifelong members of the church of Christ, but not so. They were both brought up outside the church. They were married when they went to college in Bowling Green, Kentucky. They rented an apartment near the college. The people who owned the apartment were members of the church of Christ. The church planned a gospel meeting and advertised it. Their landlords came to the apartment and invited them to attend. But brother Walston said they were not a bit interested in attending the meeting. They gave some sort of excuse and thought that would be the end of it. But not so. The next day there was a knock on the door, and when they opened it, there stood their friends again. They said, "Sorry you couldn't come last night. You missed a wonderful sermon. We hope that you can come with us tonight." Once again they came up with some kind of lame excuse, and the people left. Well, the next day, there was a knock on the door. This time they just knew who it was. They opened the door, and sure enough, there stood their friends. This time it was harder to find an excuse. Finally they accepted their gracious invitation, intending to go only once just to satisfy their friends. But when they got there they heard some things that aroused their interest. The next night they attended on their own. And they ended up attending every one of the remaining services. During this meeting both brother and sister Walston were baptized into Christ.

I share with you this little story to emphasize the importance of members getting involved and inviting others in making a gospel meeting a success. This will probably influence more non-members to attend than anything else that we do. Advertising is important. There should be newspaper advertising. Brochures are good. Radio advertising is good also. But there is nothing that is more effective than friends inviting friends.

I was just 12 years of age when I obeyed the gospel. I was brought up by godly parents and taught to go to church. The meeting was in progress where we all attended every service. walking about a mile through the woods and across a creek to the church building. We lived on a farm and one of my chores was to go get the cows at milking time. We had some cows on a neighbor's pasture - Mrs. Margie Lynch. It was the last night of the meeting with no responses. This must have bothered sister Lynch. She must have been watching for me, for when she saw me and my dog coming she appeared at the door and called for me to come over. She said, "Roy, Jr., have you ever thought about obeying the gospel?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." She said, "Have you thought about obeying the gospel during this meeting?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." She said, "Well, Roy Jr., I hope you do. You are old enough to know what you need to do to be saved. You have been taught this all your life. You have a good Christian mother and father, and they will be awfully proud of you if you do." Well, that was all the encouragement I needed. I made up my mind to become a Christian, and I have never regretted that decision. That is all that it takes sometimes. Someone - not just the preacher or an elder - some Christian man or woman taking an interest in someone else and gently prodding them with words of encouragement. Sometimes this is all that's

needed to help someone make up his mind to obey the gospel. Gospel meetings are a good time to encourage a person to become a Christian, to be born again of the water and of the Spirit.

Some people say that gospel meetings are outdated and that they don't work anymore. I don't believe it. Not for a minute! "It's not that gospel meetings don't work; it's that we don't work the gospel meetings!"