

ESSENTIALS OF EVANGELISM

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by

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CHAPTER TEN

HOW A CHURCH SHOULD PREPARE FOR A REVIVAL CAMPAIGN

TEXT: “If my people, which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chronicles 7:14).

We almost hesitate to give a lecture on this subject for fear that someone might think we are taking the assumptive step of a “know-it-all.” However, God knows and we know in our own heart that this is not the case. We certainly do not know all the answers and all the details involved in a church’s preparing for a revival campaign. Through the years from other men of God, from experience, and from making mistakes we have gathered a few helpful things which have proven to be a great blessing and have meant the salvation of many souls in revival campaigns here in the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Pontiac, Michigan, over a period of sixteen years.

During the years preachers have written us, many of them young preachers without experience, asking how a church should go about getting ready for the coming of an evangelist for a revival campaign. So as best we know how we would like to make suggestions to churches, which, if carried out, we believe will prove a great blessing to the church, a blessing and help to the evangelist, and most important of all will result in the salvation of many more precious souls.

It has been our experience, and I have found that it has been the experience of many God-called evangelists, that when they go to churches to conduct a revival campaign, the pastor and people expect the evangelist to bring the revival with him. No planning or preparation has been made before the revival campaign starts, and in many instances there has been very little prayer about the matter. Many times the only thing that is done is the announcement from the pulpit and the announcement in the church bulletin that an evangelist is coming and that a week or two weeks have been set apart for a series of special services.

I realize fully that only God can give a revival. Revival comes from God. However, the Bible plainly teaches that God’s people have a responsibility and should make every effort in the world to discharge that responsibility and be prepared for a revival campaign.

God says, **“If my people, which are called by my name,”** shall do four things:

- (1) **Humble themselves,**
- (2) **Turn from their wicked ways,**
- (3) **Seek my face,**
- (4) **Pray,**

“ . . . then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land.”

There is a human responsibility in having revivals in churches. Notice that the human responsibility must be discharged before the Divine blessings begin. Revivals do not just happen. Revivals are the result of scriptural planning, preparing and praying.

Nearly sixteen years ago when we bought the Castle Inn Building and started the work of the Emmanuel Baptist Church, there was a large steel safe or vault which was a part of the building. One day I sat down in front of the safe door and began to turn the dial to try to open the door, but though I used many combinations, the door remained fast closed. After a few minutes of this fruitless frustration, I stepped to the phone and called the real estate office from whom we had purchased the building and asked for the combination. I was given four numbers to which the dial must be turned. When this combination was used, the door opened immediately. Now God has given us a combination which if followed will always, without fail, unlock the windows of heaven and bring a flood tide of revival blessing. The trouble in so many instances is that pastors and churches will not use God's formula for revival as set forth in II Chronicles 7:14.

In the Emmanuel Baptist Church we have a deacon board composed of seven members. In the first place, these men are truly saved. They are born-again children of God. They study the Word of God. They are empowered by the Holy Spirit. They live separated lives. They do not drink nor smoke. They are quiet, honorable, godly men. They visit the sick and win the lost and teach the saints. That is the only kind of man who is fit to be on a deacon board or any other board in the church.

It has been our experience in recent revivals that having seven different committees, each headed by a deacon, has been very successful in helping the entire church to prepare for a revival campaign. These deacons head these seven committees, and they appoint as many people as they need to do the special work of that committee. A committee might have five or six on it or it might have thirty or forty, according to the need. This uses scores of people in the church for at least a month ahead of time in preparing and working for the campaign. This adds emphasis to the campaign in the hearts and minds of the people of the church. I will list these seven committees and how they are to operate.

I. PRAYER COMMITTEE

We know there can be no revival without prayer — earnest, concentrated prayer; long seasons of prayer; and regular prayer. A committee is organized to arrange for various kinds of prayer meetings.

1. First of all, cottage prayer meetings.

For a full month in advance people's names and addresses and the time of the prayer meeting are secured and announced from the pulpit. In these meetings the groups are usually not large, but neighbors meet together in a home and have an appointed time and place for prayer for the revival and for the salvation of the lost. Remember that Jesus said, **"that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven"** (Matthew 18:19).

2. Sunday School departments meet together in their council meetings for seasons of prayer.

3. Church boards are asked to meet at least once, if not more, before the campaign starts for prayer. If the board members and leaders of the church do not lead the way in the matter of prayer, there will be very little revival.

4. Special emphasis is given to prayer in the mid-week service.

5. Sunday School classes, especially the adult and young people's classes, are asked to set aside a night during the week for at least one week before the revival starts to have a special season of prayer asking God's blessing upon the revival campaign.

6. A special prayer meeting is held by the choir and all accompanists and singers.

II. PERSONAL WORK COMMITTEE

We believe that God uses personal work to win souls to Jesus Christ. I have had people say to me, "I do not like to see folks spoken to during the invitation and during the services because I believe that the Holy Spirit should do that work."

I do not agree with this in any sense of the word. The Holy Spirit must do the work, of course. We lean entirely upon Him, but the Spirit of God usually works through a human agency. If the Holy Spirit did all the work, there would be no need for an evangelist. There would be no need for a pastor. There would be no need for anyone to stand up and preach. All that we would have to do is just let the Spirit of God speak to people's hearts and show them what to do. We believe that God uses yielded, Spirit-filled people in personal work.

In John 16:7-11 we read: **"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."** Notice that Jesus said, **"I will send him unto you"** in verse 11. The Holy Spirit works through you.

Everyone interested in personal work should be called together in a special group for one or two meetings before the campaign starts.

They should be briefed on how to speak to people, how to lead them to Christ, and how to come forward with them in the meeting, stand with them never leaving them standing alone, go with them into the inquiry room, and how to take the Word of God and lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. We believe that it is perfectly proper and of the Lord to have people stationed in various parts of the auditorium watching for the uplifted hands of unsaved people so they can be useful in helping and assisting those people to go forward.

After the campaign is over, the personal workers' committee is responsible to see that every convert; in fact, every person that comes forward, is followed up, dealt with in the home from the Word of God about assurance, baptism, church membership, and going on with the Lord. These new converts need to be taught how to get into the Sunday school, the necessity of attending prayer meeting, tithing their income, studying the Word of God, and all that has to do with living the Christian life. They need to be shown the importance of having a fundamental, Bible-believing, soul-winning local church as their church home.

III. PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

This is a most important committee. It has been our experience that no matter how well a church is known or how well-known the evangelist might be who is coming to conduct the revival meeting there should be publicity before the campaign starts.

1. It has been our experience that having enough brochures or pieces of advertising printed to put into every home in the city, no matter how large or small the city might be, is a paying proposition. This advertising material should be of first-class quality. It takes some fifteen thousand pieces of literature to put one in each home in our city of approximately one hundred thousand people. This is always done at least one week before the revival campaign starts.

2. Radio advertising should be used at every advantage. Spot paid announcements are effective plus regular radio programs.

3. Newspaper advertising should be used not just the Saturday before the meeting starts but at least two or three Saturdays before the campaign gets under way.

IV. ENTERTAINMENT COMMITTEE

This we feel is also an important committee. It has to do with arranging for every detail of the entertainment of the evangelist or evangelistic party. First of all, the arrangements to see that he is met at the train or airport; arrangements for a room and accommodations for meals, and all that is involved in the entertainment of the evangelist or evangelistic party. This committee should arrange for the transportation to and from the meeting each night so that the pastor, who has many responsibilities and much on his heart and mind during a campaign, will not have to discharge this responsibility.

I might suggest that it has been our experience that it always works well for an evangelist to be placed either in a nice quiet motel or hotel rather than in a home. This is not because the evangelist is antisocial, or neither is it because he is too good to stay in a private home.

He needs quiet; he needs to be able to rest, to study and pray, and to take care of correspondence and other work that every preacher of the Gospel has all the time.

Usually when staying in a home, though it is a home of lovely, wonderful, gracious Christian people, the evangelist is obligated to do so much entertaining, to carry on a good deal of the conversation, and, therefore, is not at his best when the time comes for the revival service.

We feel it is not best to take the evangelist around to different homes for one or more meals every day. The average preacher does not care to eat this much, and usually it is not best for him physically and does not work out to the best advantage of the meeting.

The little expense involved in providing an evangelist a private room in a motel or hotel and his meals wherever he feels best to eat them certainly is well worth the cost to any church.

There might be visiting preachers who shall come to spend a night or more during the revival campaign. This committee could be responsible for their entertainment also.

V. SPECIAL NIGHTS COMMITTEE

We have found that it works well to plan a number of special nights during the course of a revival campaign. These special nights are numerous such as Church Night, Family Night, Youth Night, Neighbor Night, Ladies Night, Men's Night, Pack-A-Pew Night, Sunday School Night, etc.

1. Church Night.

On Church Night an all-out effort should be made to have every member of the church present. On that night church members should be asked to stand, and the percentage of the entire membership which are present should be announced.

2. Family Night.

This is the night when all the families are urged to have every member of their family relationship present. Usually some nice little award is given to the family with the largest number present.

3. Bring-A-Neighbor Night.

On "neighbor" night every Christian is urged to bring one person who has not previously attended the revival campaign. A committee usually arranges to pin a flower on the one who is brought and the one who brings them. This is done at the entrances to the auditorium as the people come in.

We have seen as many as two hundred new people brought in one night, many of whom would be unsaved when they come.

4. Pack-A-Pew Night.

Several days before the campaign starts, each row of seats in the building is assigned to a captain or leader. His responsibility is to have his or her row of seats completely filled on “Pack-A-Pew” night. By this method we have seen large auditoriums filled on week nights in campaigns.

5. Sunday School Night.

On Sunday School Night every superintendent and teacher and officer and pupil is urged to be present. Departments are recognized separately from the Nursery through the Adult Department. This must be well planned in advance by announcements in each department and class. A card advertising this night should be placed in the mail to everyone on the Sunday school rolls.

6. Father and Son, Mother and Daughter Night.

All fathers are asked to bring a son and all mothers to bring a daughter. People without children can “adopt” a boy or girl for this night. Many neighborhood children are reached on this night who may not attend any church or who perhaps attend a church where the gospel is not preached.

These six special nights can be used on the week nights and repeated if necessary during the second week of the campaign. Other special nights which sometimes prove effective are Ladies’ Night, Men’s Night, and Youth Night.

VI. SPECIAL DELEGATIONS COMMITTEE

We find that churches enjoy cooperating together to a certain extent even in local church revivals; that is, the preacher and people of other churches usually are very gracious about coming on certain nights and may be bringing special music. The preacher and his delegation is acknowledged. This helps the attendance of the meeting. It gives the pastor of the visiting delegation an opportunity to hear the evangelist whom he might like to engage in his church. In turn, when he has a revival meeting, the church he has visited can visit him and help him with his attendance during his revival. The visiting pastor is asked to sit on the platform and take part in the service.

Delegations also might be organized from other organizations such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, plants, factories, stores, Gideons, Christian Business Men, and other groups. All of this helps to reach people with the gospel.

VII. SUNDAY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

We feel the Sunday School is a tremendous opportunity for the winning of souls to Jesus Christ at all times and especially during the revival campaign. Every effort in the world should be made to bring the entire Sunday School under the power and impact of the revival meeting. It is usually good to start the first Monday night of the campaign with what is called Sunday School Night.

Every department is urged to come and sit together and be recognized with teachers, officers, and pupils. The department with the highest percentage present is given an award. This reaches many boys and girls, men and women, who would not otherwise be reached. In many revival campaigns the Sunday school constituency never hears the evangelist preach. This often times is the result of poor planning and the lack of preparation.

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