

KEEP OUR CAMP MEETINGS EVANGELISTIC

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The institution of the camp meeting has been known for many years as a great soul-saving effort. It was born as a result of a mighty spiritual awakening. It has been marked by great revival preaching, Spirit-anointed exhortation, mighty prevailing prayer, powerful conviction, and definite experiences in the grace of God.

At first the material arrangements for handling the camps were very simple and crude. Brush arbors, covered wagons, fire-boxes for lights, open-air tabernacles, seated groves, individual boarding arrangements, and many such temporary plans were all that was necessary. Worship and devotion were the main purposes of the gatherings. As time passed more permanent arrangements were made for the comfort and profit of the worshippers. More attention had to be paid to the sanitary means of handling a crowd for several days. Boarding facilities became necessary. Permanent auditoriums were provided. Cabins and cottages began to appear. Possibly these were necessary and legitimate improvements.

With the passing years the tendency to program the camp meetings began. The churches turned toward organization and more organization. Men's groups, women's groups, youth's groups, children's groups, etc., all had to have provision made for their parts on the general program. And, too often, program became the dominating factor. Days for this and days for that; and special speakers for this and special speakers for that; special singers for this occasion and special something else for other occasions began to substitute for the spontaneous response of the people as a whole to the freedom of worship. Evangelism was to become just one of the features of the modern camp meeting. Study groups, lecture periods, youth rallies and other interests were to assume their places with the evangelistic service. In many cases the time would be too limited for the old-time love-feasts. Perhaps much of the above is an improvement—and then perhaps it is not.

Another change which has affected our camps is the matter of attendance. In the former years, preparations were made weeks in advance to attend the camp meeting throughout. With the change from the old farm days to the age of high-pressure industry, people are finding it more difficult to "camp on the grounds" and bring the children with them. Many are really too comfortably settled in their nice homes to bother with camping inconveniences. They get in their fine car and drive over for an evening service or for Sunday. It is rather nice to go over on Sunday and meet the old friends, you know. Those early morning holiness meetings, those blessed fellowship services, those rich sermons to the church are missed by so many who really need them badly. The church could be greatly enriched by the camp meeting if a goodly number from the home churches were to attend and get a fresh anointing on their souls.

We do not wish to eliminate good program, nor to set aside any group which is functioning, not for itself, but for the general interest of the church and the salvation of the lost. However, we are concerned that our camp

meetings maintain the purpose for which they were raised up—the awakening and salvation of sinners, the sanctification of believers and the support of gospel truth over the land. We will support any approved means to gain the above ends. We are not advocating stagnation, nor a mere assembling of the faithful to minister to each other. God has given to us the best doctrine and experience in all the world and calls upon us to put our light upon a candle-stick. Our great commission is to evangelize. Our camp meetings should be places of spiritual power; and if they are, they will be attractive and sinners will be saved.

Some years ago we had opened work in a new town. We were speaking one day to a prominent old merchant. We said we would like to have him come to our meetings. He replied that he had not been to church for many years. Upon pressing him for a reason he said somewhat as follows:

"When I was a young man I used to go to the old Methodist's field meetings. When you went on those grounds, you could feel the power of God from your head to your feet. You heard the sound of prayer ascending from earnest hearts. The very hymns were pregnant with a sense of the divine. It is a long time since I have seen that holy zeal and felt the awe of God's presence. There is too much parrot worship these days."

Perhaps there was a great deal of truth in the old merchant's observation. We need more of God and less of the human, more devotion and less program. We appreciate many special messages in song. How telling they are when they come under inspiration! I well remember when I was only a little boy sitting in God's house one Sabbath evening. A large crowd filled the church. The pastor had preached a message of gospel truth. There was a pause before the altar call. A sister arose from the pews and walked forward and stood before the altar. Raising her hand she sang:

"And am I only born to die?
And must I suddenly comply
With nature's stern decree?
What after death for me remains —
Celestial joys or hellish pains,
To all eternity?"

A holy hush fell upon that congregation. Several left their seats and made their way to the altar and were soon rejoicing in deliverance.

The late John Waddell, who for many years lived in the Ottawa country, sang the gospel message with conviction and power. Coming into the forenoon meeting of a large Eastern camp meeting, just before the preacher arose to preach, the elder felt led to say, "John, sing us a piece." He told me in later years that instantly the Spirit gave him a hymn. Stepping out in front, he raised his hand and sang. Conviction fell on the place. Sinners flocked to the altar and lined up in front and behind the mourner's bench. That meeting ran all day, and night, and until two o'clock the next day, and dozens of souls were saved. May God give us more camp meetings like that.

THE STENCH OF STAGNATION

Norman E. Trafton

According to the dictionary, to stagnate is to cease to flow or to become foul from want of motion. Either definition carries the ominous consequences of inactivity. The glistening

waters of a mossy lake fed by bubbling springs, can become a stagnant pool whose tepid waters become the breeding place of all manner of impurities. In too many cases this is the unnecessary condition of the true church of God, for our greatest foe is not the scourge of modernism and error, but the very presence of stagnation within our own borders. When the church is strong she impresses the world, but when she is weak she is repressed by the world. God intends that His Church be a mighty reservoir fed by eternal springs, out of which will flow rivers of living water bringing life and beauty into dry and barren lands. When we cease to flow, the heavenly springs are stopped, and the state of stagnation begins, for God never supplies more than we are willing to expend.

This has ever been the history of a dying church, and may we have courage and concern to recognize that we can be overcome with the same calamity. We have been entrusted with the glorious news of full salvation, holding high the standard of purity, but unless we soon pulsate with that message, we too can become a stagnant pool seething with impurities. If we keep pure, we must flow. We must either be spiritual bees, or busy-bodies with much ado about nothing. Facts assert that in comparison to our territory we have made very little advancement, and how can we expect those who are opposed to, or ignorant of the Holiness message, to be vitally impressed when we who are exponents of this doctrine, fail to go everywhere, or anywhere preaching the Word. Surely this is not God's best for us as a denomination. Can we hear the voice of God commanding: "Go up and possess the land?"

To my mind, some of the essentials lacking are: FIRE—It is true that fire is the emblem of cleansing, provided in the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, but this fire also manifests itself in a burning zeal for the progress of redemption in the world at large. The deepest emphasis of Pentecost is not self-cleansing, but rather the cry for souls, which is the truest testimony of a pure heart. Only then will living water begin to flow, and break through the narrow confines of our borders. FAITH—To believe before you see, that is faith. Too many times with the people of God, it is seeing before believing. To dissect circumstances, magnify difficulties, and court discouragement, is to frustrate God's purpose, and raise up a barrier to blessing. If we are to make progress, it will not be through human effort and planning alone, but through real faith in the resources of an almighty God. As a denomination we must possess the land, or our carcasses will bleach in the desert of deterioration. FOLLOW-UP—When we have raised a standard in a new field there has been a lack of follow-up, until the infant has died of starvation and exposure, or has been appropriated by another people more aggressive in error than we are in truth. The opportunities lost over our land in recent years are heart-rending, but can we not challenge ourselves to a new Crusade for Souls, and coupled with fire, faith and follow-up, release a deluge of Living Water our land so drastically needs. Pentecost first penetrated Jerusalem. Our Jerusalem, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Maine still wait for the sound of abundance of rain. May streams begin to flow today!