

Evangelism, The Great Urgency

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chiefly as the great preacher soul winner, evangelist, writer. His primary business was to win souls from darkness to light, and he witnessed the transformation of ten thousands of souls.

John Wesley's ministry was more than one of protest; it was one of declaration, of advocacy. He spoke of the sovereign, free grace of God, of the terror of the judgment to come, of the need of practical godliness. But John Wesley had more than doctrine to define, he had souls to win.

John Wesley's warm heart led him out on an itinerant ministry—thousands of miles of travel and a thousand sermons each year! In public and in private he was seeking souls for God and heaven. He kept his preachers on the move. (Early American Methodist preachers often changed circuits every six or twelve months.) Wesley did not view a church as a good living, or as a comfortable parsonage, or as an agreeable society. He saw the fields as ripe to harvest, and sent out reapers. According to his faith, revivals broke out in the midst of England's social and industrial tempest of that day, and revival swept on almost unabated on this continent through the American Revolution. With John Wesley, soul winning was the great urgency! His class meetings and examinations were to the end of promoting respect for godliness in the community.

But why all this review? Have you never asked yourself the question, "What is the primary emphasis of Wesleyan Methodism?" Does our denomination exist primarily to protest the wrongs of others or to simply warn and discipline saints? Do we not exist also for the purpose of proclaiming the righteousness of God, endeavoring to win sinners to the love of Jesus?

I wonder if it is not wrong to say, "We are not interested in numbers." Indeed one may grant this if we are speaking merely of ecclesiastical advance, but we deny it in terms of the need of the vast numbers of men to be evangelized. Here is the Pentecostal pattern: "So were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:5).

Frankly, we are interested in NUMBERS—not just in the number of people whom we can persuade to become Wesleyan Methodists, but in the number of people we Wesleyan Methodists can win to Christ. The poor record of our church as an evangelizing agency ought to greatly humble us.

I cannot believe that we need to change our doctrinal pattern, nor do we need to abandon our "close" preaching. But I am persuaded that we ought to preach to the sinners truth designed to reach sinners, and then to preach to the church truth designed to sanctify and discipline the members of the body of Christ. We need to stress "the first principles of the doctrines of Christ" to the unsaved. As a matter of fact, I wonder if it would not be advisable to have special revival series for the unsaved and then a separate series of meetings for the church. In our endeavour to accomplish both these ends in a scheduled meeting, we often fail to accomplish either one.

Wesleyan Methodism needs to grow and evangelize in order to keep vigorous and renewed. Of course a lot of replowing and reseeding needs to be patiently done in the field of the church, but it is a positive thrill to break a piece of ground for the first time, to watch the effects of the first dose of Holy Ghost conviction on a sinner who experiences his "first love" for Christ.

There will always be church problems; there will always be some unsanctified Christians. But we must not

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Choosing A Pastor

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I use the word "choosing" rather than "calling". It suggests carefulness, consideration. In Christian groups it should prompt Prayerfulness. I need not remind you that the right man for your particular Communion is important. God has called different types to accommodate different tastes, but different tastes are often found within the one group. It is evident that no one man can quite fulfill the desires of all. Here then, is an occasion for charity. However, the possibility of mis-fits exists and should not be over-looked, inasmuch as particular cases allow for.

In each case consideration should be given your present Pastor. There are undeniable advantages in extending the "call". (1) You know what you have. You may have to guess what you will get. Your pastor's knowledge of you and your acquaintance with him can be very helpful to each. His knowledge of the church's need could make for a very successful year if he had your vote to remain. (2) The cost of moving to both church and pastor could be avoided, and should be, unless there are very sound reasons why it ought to be otherwise. It would be wise economy to put Four or Five Hundred Dollars into the church treasury rather than into a Moving Van every two or three years. Personally, I shall believe we are making progress when a small minority in some of our churches cease tiring so quickly of good men, if you could ever be satisfied one could have more patience with you. Why don't you try? This change might be more helpful to you spiritually, than a change of pastor.

Last Year some of our churches said to me, "We are sorry we did not think of the New Ruling regarding the possible Two or Three year Call." A splendid consideration, and something that should be taken advantage of in many of our churches. The pastor receiving such an expression of confidence from his people as this gives will have a real "face-lifting". That is not the only advantage, however. What about the advantages of long-time-planning? Revival campaigns may be planned, with the evangelistic team wanted, if freedom to make extended arrangements is had. I am all for it wherever it is feasible, and I trust our churches will this year recognize its advantages.

What I have written to this point applies mostly to our churches. Now, a word to our pastors: I know your feelings; I have you on my heart. To have, even a bit of our future in the hands of a ballot box, is somewhat unpleasant. Nevertheless, there is an open road ahead, and it is a High Road for those who will take it. If circumstances open the road to retaliation, don't take it. Your business is to "follow peace with all men, and holiness." Let no "root of bitterness" spring up. Act with confidence upon our Christian Faith: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." The thing that has hurt me most since I became one of you is not that on a few occasions, and perhaps rightly so, some have been voted out, but that some of us have been less that gracious because of it. Every church has a right to change, but you and I have no right to charge it with treason because it has voted for change. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." Special times spent in prayer by both church and pastor can help greatly when adjustments are necessary. May the "Lord of the harvest" give His blessing, and guidance.

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"He is not foolish who gives away what he cannot keep, to obtain what he cannot lose."