

TRAGEDY IN THE CHURCH –THE MISSING EVANGELISTS!

Over the years we have all read or watched news items about groups who make loud noises over issues of concern to them. The sole purpose of these groups is to make everyone aware of the cause for which they are passionate.

I have seen passionate men and women risk their lives for their cause. The causes vary but the passionate (*fervent*) determination remains the same.

It could be a protest over an airport run way extension, the protection of a tree or animal rights. We have seen people chained to railings, lying in the road, generally endangering themselves for the cause. We can think 'crazy people' but they are passionate (zealous) for their beliefs, their cause. And it stirs them into action as they give of their time and money.

It can all seem so crazy when viewed from the comfort of an arm chair. But then so does a real passionate commitment to World Evangelism when viewed from the safety and comfort of another Church meeting.

The big question we face after years of personal renewal: Do you have the passion to win the lost at all cost? How concerned are we really over the eternal destination of the people who we pass in the streets or the shopping centre? Does the reality of hell for those who don't know Jesus affect us? How we lack the passion of those who fight for temporary causes!

Most Churches have a sign outside announcing the service times followed by 'all are welcome'! But we could add a footnote underneath that reads 'But we would be surprised if you did come! And why should they come when we show little concern to bring them to the life for which Christ died to give them.

On the whole we make little if any attempt to reach the lost in our communities, we show more commitment to the next 'bless me' meeting or conference. It is no surprise that 80% of churches are stagnant or declining and the ones that seem to be growing are doing so mainly through transferred growth.

For many Churches and individuals, one reason for the lack of Evangelism is because it's not easy. Yet the longer we refuse to make Jesus' last command our first concern the harder it becomes to get started. It is far easier to attend another conference, stand in a prayer line and receive yet another prophesy. By doing so we miss out on the blessing of being obedient to the Lords command of "GO". That blessing is the development and growth of spiritual gifts and souls being saved.

It's time we moved away from a pleasure cruise mentality that pervades much of the church and become a battle ship! The reality is we are at War!

Let's face it, Jesus never went through all He did so we could just have nice meetings, ego stroking prophesies or 'cool' conferences. NO! He never said, "I have come so you can have great meetings in abundance! Let us remind ourselves why he did come.

He came to open the way to the Father for all who would repent and believe. He came to die, to pay the price for every, and all sin, to offer pardon and forgiveness, and the liberating Gift of the Holy Spirit.

The cost to God (Father Son and Holy Spirit) was greater than we could ever imagine. Such was the passions of God to provide a great salvation for a lost people. Then the promised Holy Spirit was sent so we would have power, power to be His witnesses of the Gift of Salvation through Jesus Christ.

Lets us remember that the Holy Spirit is a witnessing Spirit, His work is to point to Jesus and to draw people to Jesus. The Holy Spirit brings the passion and urgency of Heavens into believers lives. Any encounter with God must result in change, a change that desires to do His will.

When Saul had his Damascus road experience he cried out, "What can I do for you?" How different that is from many of today's believers who ask "What can you do for me?" Saul (Paul) was ignited with a passion for his Lord and for the lost.

Paul was prepared to go into pagan territory, virgin ground for the Gospel. These were areas held under the dominion of darkness, he knew before him were hardships, difficulties and persecution, but he pressed on to make Christ known.

The love of Christ compelled him forward because he wanted to live in obedience to the one who owned him.

The same passion is seen throughout Church history. Passionate christians involved in passionate Evangelism. The command to 'Go' was taken seriously. Why then is passion so lacking in Western Churches today?

The answer is that Evangelism and particularly the ministry of the Evangelist is not high on, if it appears at all on a Church agenda. We pay lip service to Ephesians 4 v 11 and remain fixed with a mono ministry mentality.

Most Churches are locked in to a Pastor mentality. There is the senior Pastor, associate Pastor, assistant Pastor, youth Pastor, singles Pastor, Children's Pastors, worship Pastor! In fact there is more Pastor that in an Italian Restaurant!!

Whilst we have seen in recent years the recurrence of other ministries, Teachers, Prophets and if you look in some magazines, there are plenty of Apostles! But where are the Evangelists? How many Churches do you know that have a preaching Evangelist on staff? Your answer is probably none!

Yet Eph 4 v11 states that like the other gifts the Evangelist is there to prepare Gods people for works of service. That service is natural everyday evangelism that causes Churches and believers to grow.

I believe no one can stir up passion for the lost in the hearts of people like an Evangelist. The Evangelist has that passion running through his/her veins. So often the ministry is on the cutting edge, spending time with the lost, reaching out to them. Without the Evangelists ministry the Church becomes anaemic.

The Evangelist often faces a lonely walk, proving the Saviour to meets needs, often facing financial struggles because churches have no budget for Evangelism or an Evangelist and often some churches cannot cope with the 'rough diamond' of the Evangelist as he/she may upset some people with his direct approach.

Sadly the Evangelist is then, joked about, "they count fingers not hands", "he is speaking evangelistically (stretching the point!) "It is disciples not decisions we need." Yes but it all starts with a decision as my life and ministry did over 35 years ago.

As for exaggerations on numbers, the ones I have known and ministered with at grass roots levels certainly have not exaggerated!

But, what about the Prophet who checks their words out for accuracy, or the Pastors who control tightly or the Teachers who exaggerate the teachings of Jesus or the self appointed Apostles/Bishops some of whom fleece the Body of Christ?

Some years ago I was attending a Home Missions meeting in the UK Assemblies of God. A question was asked, "Where have all the Evangelists gone?" One pastor quickly replied, "We have starved them to death."

There was laughter but all knew the truth of the statement. Why? Because little or no place is given to the Evangelist, even in Charismatic or Pentecostal Churches. Some Evangelists have resorted to a Pastoral role to provide income for their family and satisfy their passion with a few mission trips.

The Evangelist needs a body to belong to, to minister in, and be sent out from and report back to. It is the Antioch type of church that sends and goes that we must have. Today we have many schools of ministry, schools of prophets, but not schools of evangelism taught by evangelists to equip the church to reach the nations.

If we are serious about the harvest, passionate to see the word of the Lord proclaimed to every tribe and nations, then lets us pray that the Lord of the Harvest would raise up harvesters, Evangelists', the forsaken and neglected ministry of the Body of Christ.

The harvest remains plentiful but the labourers are few. Let's change that trend for the Glory of the King!

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