

SUM BIBLE COLLEGE AND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE MINISTRY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH EVANGELIST

ANNA KRISTENE O'DELL

THE VOCATION OF THE EVANGELIST

DR. SCOTT CAMP

January 7, 2017

The Ministry of the Local Church Evangelist

One must see a bigger picture if the random pieces of a puzzle are to make sense. It is the same when looking at the specific gifts that Christ gave to His church. Each have been fashioned for a specific fit, yet if we do not start with the universal design, we cannot assign them their proper place. God only has Plan A and, in this age, it is executed through His church. He does not need to formulate Plan B. When each member does his or her part, the universal Church of Jesus Christ is a brilliant conduit showing forth the glory of God in the earth. Although the evangelist is associated more with those outside the church, this gift is none the less given to strengthen the Lord's people. Without the unique design of the evangelist, the overall picture of Christ's redemptive work would quite possibly be forgotten. This paper will seek to establish the role of the staff evangelist and how this piece of the puzzle strengthens the overall vitality of the Lord's purposes both among His people and those yet to enter His promises.

What is the Church?

Before we look at the role of the local church evangelist, let us define the purpose of the church. We know in Ephesians 4:11, the gifts that the Lord gave to His church for its edification are as listed: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Paul's letter to the Ephesian church has at its theme the very purpose of the church.¹ The risen Savior has been given authority over all things. He in turn gives that authority to those who are found "in Christ." He fills His church – those who have been called out of the world and into the bosom of Jesus - with the riches of heaven so that we might both proclaim and demonstrate the very nature of the eternal Kingdom. Ephesians 3:8-10 states, *"To me (Paul), though I am the very least of all the*

¹ Dr. Thomas Constable, "Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas Constable," 2001-1016 StudyLight.org, Bible Commentaries, <http://www.studyLight.org/commentaries/dcc/ephesians-1.html>, (accessed December 31, 2016).

saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." Through conducting a word study, we may add emphasis to this scripture by saying that what Paul is to proclaim is the vastness of the very blessings that Jesus bestows upon those who believe; and that God has now revealed what was once hidden. This hidden mystery is the gospel which is clothed in the person of Jesus Christ. Through a myriad of ways, the divine wisdom of God has revealed the means of salvation to the principalities in the heavenly realms through His called-out ones – His church.

The "principalities in heavenly realms" are both the angelic beings that worship God and those that fell from their lofty position. In an insightful article written by Jonathan C. Naumann,² the author expounds on the idea that God's full nature would not have been revealed to the angelic beings without showing forth His mercy and redemption to fallen mankind. They would have known His just condemnation and punishment of Satan and his followers, but that would not have been a full representation of His character. It is through Jesus's sacrifice on the cross that we see the fullness of the Lord's love and mercy. Now, because of the resurrection, mercy may be bestowed in place of punishment for all those that repent and believe upon the finished work of Christ. It is this specific message that is preached in heavenly places every time a new believer is brought into the church. The fullness of the Lord's character has been revealed to created beings in the heavenly realms because of the existence of the church. Naumann writes, "The Lamb, 'slain from the foundation of the world'" (Rev 3:8, NIV) is the object of angelic adoration, whose saving gospel they witness unfolding through the church, and in each member

² Jonathan C. Naumann, "What angels witness 'through the church'," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 80, no. 1-2 (January 2016): 140-148, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed January 1, 2017).

of the church....”³ Consequently, it is this very revelation – the church – that is a constant reminder to the demonic realm of God’s victory over their darkened schemes. Paul writes in Colossians 2:15, “*And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, by triumphing over them by the cross.*”

The Local Church Expression

“The ordained ministry should be exercised in a personal, collegial and communal way. It should be personal because the presence of Christ among his people can be most effectively pointed to by the person ordained to proclaim the gospel and to call the community to serve the Lord in unity of life and witness. It should be collegial for there is a need for a college of ordained ministers sharing in the common task of representing the concerns of the community. Finally, the intimate relationship between the ordained ministry and the community should find expression in a communal dimension where the exercise of the ordained ministry is rooted in the life of the community and requires the community’s effective participation in the discovery of God’s will and the guidance of the Spirit.”⁴

The above quote is from an article concerning the *Episkope`* meaning the *overseers of the church*. Although Paul was adamant that his authority as an apostle came from the Lord, he still saw the need to submit himself to the leaders of the Jerusalem church. In Galatians 6, we see true community and accountability as believers in Christ both watch over one another and submit themselves to be watched over. Truly as Americans, we are highly conscientious of “our rights” as individuals. When we come to Christ, however, “our rights” are to give way to the betterment of others. We are now members of one body that functions together to show forth the Kingdom of God. Self-centeredness gives way to mutual submission. Individualism gives way to corporate expression. In this, “the principalities in heavenly realms” not only witness the initial redemptive

³ Jonathan C. Naumann, "What angels witness 'through the church'," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 80, no. 1-2 (January 2016): 140-148, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 1, 2017).

⁴ Tony Peck, "Episkopé -- A Baptist Perspective," *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 10, no. 3 (May 2010): 5-21, *Religion and Philosophy Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 6, 2017).

act when a believer is brought into the family of God; they now watch as those who have been saved from the exaltation of self learn to walk humbly before God by esteeming others. Within the confines of this local church expression, a shining light goes forth into the surrounding community that the Kingdom of God is among them. Is this not what Jesus had in mind when He stated, *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:35.*

The Role of the Evangelist Defined

It is in this context of unity in the Spirit that the five-fold ministry gifts are explained in Ephesians 4. Corporate growth is to be spear-headed by those that God calls as overseers of His people. These are servant leaders who have been given the task of equipping, strengthening, and maturing the body. All five have the responsibility of shepherding, teaching, and putting forth correct doctrine; yet, all five are unique in their expression. *“...when each part is working properly, the body grows so that it builds itself up in love.” (Eph 4:16.)*

What is the proper expression of the evangelist within the context of the local church? We get the title of the evangelist from the word *euaggelion* meaning a “bringer of good tidings,” or a “preacher of the gospel.”⁵ Certainly, one called as an evangelist will be about reaching those outside the church walls with the good news that Jesus has paid the full penalty of sin and His mercy extends to all who repent and believe. But within the corporate setting, the staff evangelist has the distinct job of equipping the saints in order that they might be able to share the gospel with those who are outside the faith community. He or she is also a mobilizer so that the local church has a presence outside the four walls of its facility in which the truth of the gospel is proclaimed. The administration of the local church ministries, as well as, the shepherding care of

⁵ James, Orr, M.A., D.D. General Editor, "Entry for 'EVANGELIST,'" International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (1915) <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/evangelist/> (accessed January 6, 2017).

the families within the church body make it easy to forget the mission of redemption for the lost when left to the pastor alone. To be fair, most pastors have not forgotten their community. They simply are not designed to carry the full load of ministry by themselves. Although there is a divine tension between the five-fold gifts, a healthy local church body should have all the gifts in operation so that the fullness of Christ may be realized.

With the mention of a divine tension, it must be said that the staff evangelist must see him/herself as a member of a team that is led by the Senior Pastor. The evangelist often operates as a harvester or reaper. However, the pastor and teachers have most likely been sowing good seed for quite some time before the harvest is ready.⁶ Many pastors have ministries that have sown into the community. While it may be tempting to glorify the visible effects of reaping the evangelist often displays, in staying with the true nature of the Church, all gifts must be seen in light of corporate cohesiveness so that the one receiving the glory is Christ Himself.

Methodology of the Staff Evangelist

Depending on the influence of the local church body and the pastor, the staff evangelist may be sent out by his/her local church to other local churches. Most local church bodies cannot afford to have all five-fold ministries on staff. However, healthy churches are those who are not afraid to be in relationship with one another. Would it not be beneficial, specifically evangelists and prophets, to be sent to other local bodies to help equip specific cities or regions. With this in mind, the evangelist could continue to exercise his/her preaching and mobilizing gifts during seasons where a different focus is needed within their home church.

⁶ Living Ministries International, "The Office and Calling of the Evangelist," LMI: An International Ministry of Reaching, Teaching, and Preaching, <http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/peasley/The%20office%20and%20calling%20of%20the%20evangelist%20-%20Facilitators%20Guide.pdf> (accessed January 6, 2017)

Chuck Angel, in an article concerning the staff evangelist, divides the responsibilities of this role into two spheres: crusade preaching and church equipping.⁷ He breaks this vocational position down to spending a maximum of 24 weeks equipping the saints on the home front and 24 weeks preparing and executing crusades. This would leave 4 weeks of vacation. In this manner, the full range of gifts the evangelist brings to the table could be utilized. Taking these two models, let us discuss what this might mean for the staff evangelist both locally and abroad, also keeping in mind the effects of this ministry within the local body.

Local Ministry

First and foremost, for a staff evangelist, must be the needs of his/her home church when it comes to evangelism. The staff evangelist does not have to take on ministry tasks outside of their lane simply because there is a need. By doing so, they will inevitably begin to take on a role in which they are ill-equipped and the fire for souls will begin to wane. However, he/she must labor to see evangelism become a fully functioning force within the community through their own church family. There must be a plan of action that offers equipping for all members and an organized opportunity for their church to share the gospel within their city. It might be beneficial to offer a different evangelistic event each quarter. This would allow time to prepare and equip new members for each evangelistic endeavor. They could be both of an outward nature in community outreach, and events that bring the lost into the church for a gospel presentation. By doing this, you are building teams that are learning what it takes to pull off organized events in which everyone learns to share their faith. The culmination of each of these quarterly events should be that the evangelist is to preach the service in order to reap the harvest after each outreach.

⁷ Chuck Angel, "The Local Church Evangelist: Defined, Demonstrated, and Defended," Paper prepared for Dr. Allen Street, The Vocational Evangelist, Criswell College (1986).

If the staff evangelist is to be sent to other churches, this too is a time of equipping for his/her home church. The teams that have been trained to execute the quarterly outreaches, should have included those who are trained for altar ministry. When the staff evangelist is sent to a neighboring church, he/she goes with a team that can facilitate both an organized outreach and minister powerfully in the altars alongside the evangelist. In doing this, the evangelist is raising up other evangelists, that when ready, can be sent out both locally, regionally, and nationally. All of this is done through the sending of the home church.

Crusades

If the Senior Pastor has vision for beyond the local body, then he/she needs the largeness of the evangelist's abilities. There is a difference between an outreach and a crusade. The latter requires a mobilization of churches that will work together to fill a large gathering space where numerous people can respond to the gospel message. On the Go Ministries⁸ sites that statistically the percentage of non-members at most evangelistic events are as follows: Local Church Meeting - 5%; Neutral Site - Denominational Crusade - 15%; Neutral Site - United Crusade - Cross Denominational - 35%. They also state that a united crusade draws an estimate of 51% of new visitors each night. One may argue that para-church organizations are more equipped to handle crusade events. While it's true that they can be completely devoted to a single event if need be, to pull off an area-wide crusade, it would be wise to enlist as many churches as possible. If the local staff evangelist is the organizer, it creates a network of churches that can work together on future projects as well. One of the weaknesses of crusades is the lack of

⁸ Crusade Evangelism, On the Go Ministries, <http://www.onthego.org/minis/crusadeevan.html> (accessed January 6, 2017).

follow-up.⁹ When organized through a local church, this can be managed much more effectively by connecting new converts to the churches involved during the crusade event.

Missions

The staff evangelist should oversee the churches mission's goals. He/she shouldn't be bogged down with organizing the missions giving in which the church is committed. The evangelist should organize the missions teams and set the goals for the church-led missions trips. Again, much equipping would be involved. Although humanitarian aid is often an open door for missions, the evangelist needs to remain true to his/her calling of equipping others to share the gospel. Depending on the vision of the Senior Pastor, missions teams could be sent all over the world from the base of the local church. The evangelist would need to sit down with the pastor at the beginning of the year and plan the evangelism projects. Between local ministry including outreaches, regional events such as crusades, and overseas missions, the staff evangelist could fulfill his/her role in preaching the gospel far beyond the borders of their own city.

Effects of Evangelism on the Church

In his paper, Chuck Angel touches on how evangelistic teams raised up from within the local church keeps the fire for evangelism alive within the local body. As these teams return from their endeavors and share the stories of the harvest, those who spent time in prayer, financial giving, or labor of any kind share in the joy of soul winning.¹⁰ Once the evangelistic ministry is in full force within the local church, the personality of the evangelist is no longer the focus, rather it has become part of the corporate identity. No longer will the church be satisfied

⁹ Crusade Evangelism, On the Go Ministries, <http://www.onthego.org/minis/crusadeevan.html> (accessed January 6, 2017).

¹⁰ Chuck Angel, "The Local Church Evangelist: Defined, Demonstrated, and Defended," Paper prepared for Dr. Allen Street, The Vocational Evangelist, Criswell College (1986).

with either an internal focus on its existing congregants, or allowing church growth through the transferring of memberships. Now, true Kingdom-mindedness has been awakened through evangelism and the rejoicing of the angels over repentant sinners¹¹ is shared by the congregation. The touch of heaven is tangibly present in the worship services and sinners will know there is a church in their city where they can truly find freedom in Christ and in which they are welcome.

Unique Warfare Concerning the Evangelist

This leads us to a unique aspect of the evangelist's call that is seen most clearly as he/she submits themselves to the local church. John R. Rice says it best when he simply states, "One of the best recommendations that evangelism and evangelists have is that they arouse opposition."¹² He puts forth the idea that, even though the evangelist may experience criticism from those around him/her, they need to remember that the opposition is from Satan himself. He states that, "(Satan) is set on slandering evangelists and keeping people from hearing them preach." Why would the devil be so set against evangelists? We must remember, we carry the message that puts him to open shame.

Looking at Pentecostal history as it pertains to global missions, the collaborative authors of *Introducing World Missions* say this, "They also looked to intercessory prayer for spiritual victory in the cosmic realm to pin down satanic forces that resist the evangelization of the nations."¹³ The need to be equipped in the warfare tactic of intercessory prayer is a must for an evangelist. All evangelists are aware of spiritual opposition before they preach the gospel. Any evangelist who truly understands the magnitude of their calling has learned to humble

¹¹ Luke 15:10, *The Holy Bible*, (English Standard Version)

¹² John R. Rice, *The Evangelist*, Sword of the Lord Foundation, Murfreesboro, Tennessee: (1968), p 178.

¹³ A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary McGee, "*Introducing World Missions*," Baker Academic, Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, MI: (2015) p 139.

themselves before God through prayer before ever attempting to stand before others and preach. However, for the staff evangelist, intercessory prayer takes on an entirely different focus.

We must not shy away from the understanding that the demonic realm fights to keep our churches locked in battles of little significance. This is often seen as personality differences among church members, or different directional values, but in truth – much of it is spiritual warfare designed to bring weariness upon the pastor and leaders so that the true expression of the Kingdom never comes forth. Often controlling spirits are influencing board members as they tie the hands of pastors. Do not be surprised, staff evangelist, if God calls upon you to intercede for the breaking of the dominant mindset that has your church in lockdown. Especially, as it pertains to fear of outsiders and broken people being brought into the fellowship. Just know this, intercessory prayer is a unique ministry of sharing in the travailing heart of the very One that ever lives to intercede for us before the Father's throne – that being the Lord Jesus Himself. And we must remember, that the love of Jesus caused Him to take up the humiliating instrument of the cross – even unto death. To successfully maneuver the warfare involved in intercessory prayer, one must take this scripture to heart, *“And they have conquered him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto to death.”*¹⁴ Why is the evangelist called upon in such a manner? Because ours is the message of redemption that brings the full measure of the Lord's character into light to “the principalities in heavenly places.” True intercessory prayer is both private and public in the fact that what you are privately fighting in the spirit realm, God is publicly using as a testimony of His redemptive heart toward sinners. In this light, the atoning blood of Christ is magnified as a reminder to all involved that the Lord's sacrifice is fully sufficient to cleanse every stain.

¹⁴ Revelation 12:11, *The Holy Bible*, (ESV)

Proper Perspective

Many in the church today are automatically suspicious of the evangelist. This is often due to stories of impropriety and excess of evangelists who pioneered the way within the Pentecostal movement. Wanting to guard against what some deem as “wild fire” and “pride,” many of our Pentecostal churches have replaced the Kingdom expression of Spiritual gifts with a more pragmatic approach that seems prudent and wise. While it is certainly true that many pioneers of Pentecostalism pushed beyond the boundaries of the Holy Spirit, we must remember that they were pioneers. The lessons had not been learned. The need for accountability was not known as it is today. Those who were seeking the full expression of the Holy Spirit were often dealing with pressure, the likes of which, we may never know. They were ridiculed, ostracized, glorified, and, in many cases, isolated. There were no guidelines to help facilitate healthy accountability. We cannot deny the negative effect that some evangelists have had on Pentecostal history. However, we should not swing the pendulum to the other extreme.

Because of this mindset, many churches today have forgotten that to be Kingdom-minded, we must operate as salt and light in the world. Instead of being a beacon of light to the city in which we live, some pastors have adopted the idea that Kingdom expression is pride. There is more of an emphasis put on appearances and a perfecting of the flesh through self-effort than the redemptive story that Jesus wants to write upon every heart. The staff evangelist needs to know that they must maneuver through every ounce of murky water that has accumulated over the years in order to serve his/her local church. They will do well to remember that he/she has been called to serve the church by Christ Himself. Jesus loves His church and demonstrated it by giving Himself up for her.¹⁵

¹⁵ Ephesians 5:25, *The Holy Bible*, (ESV)

Application

The success of the staff evangelist depends on the relationship he/she has with their pastor. Paul Mershon writes this, “The evangelist and pastor must be pulling together in the same harness, and must have a mutual burden and vision for the three-fold purpose of both pastor and evangelist (the perfecting of the saints – the work of the ministry – the edifying of the body of Christ).¹⁶ There must be an equal yoke that is shared. They must share a common vision with the understanding that the goal is the church reaching the maturity that Christ so desires. If the pastor and the evangelist do not share the same scope and breadth of vision, one will be left dealing with constant discontentment.

The overriding strength of becoming a staff evangelist is the fact that the excesses and individualism that characterized the pioneering evangelist will be in check as true accountability can be had in a church setting. In this manner, the evangelist is brought into the description we mentioned in Galatians 6 where the church truly becomes a community of light that is unified through the betterment of others. The isolation that many itinerate evangelist deal with is given over to true community. Will there be spiritual battles to fight? Yes, and no one will sense them more than the evangelist – but, who is it that is more equipped to move beyond the fleshly offenses that spiritual battles try to create than one with the specific message of redemption. Dear evangelist – do you really know the awesome privilege you have been given?

¹⁶ Paul Mershon, “Understanding the Office and Ministry of the Evangelist,” (2017) Revival Thoughts, <http://www.revivalthoughts.org/NewTheEvangelist.htm> (accessed January 7, 2017).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary McGee. *“Introducing World Missions.”* Baker Academic. Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, MI: (2015).
- Angel, Chuck. “The Local Church Evangelist: Defined, Demonstrated, and Defended.” Paper prepared for Dr. Allen Street. *The Vocational Evangelist*. Criswell College (1986).
- Constable, Thomas, Dr. “Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas Constable.” 2001-1016 Studylight.org, Bible Commentaries. <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/ephesians-1.html> (accessed December 31, 2016).
- Crusade Evangelism. On the Go Ministries. <http://www.onthego.org/minis/crusadeevan.html> (accessed January 6, 2017).
- Living Ministries International. “The Office and Calling of the Evangelist.” LMI: An International Ministry of Reaching, Teaching, and Preaching. <http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/peasley/The%20office%20and%20calling%20of%20the%20evangelist%20-%20Facilitators%20Guide.pdf> (accessed January 6, 2017)
- Naumann, Jonathan C. "What angels witness 'through the church'." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 80, no. 1-2 (January 2016): 140-148. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed January 1, 2017).
- Orr, James, M.A., D.D. General Editor. "Entry for 'EVANGELIST.'" International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (1915) <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/evangelist/> (accessed January 6, 2017).
- Paul Mershon. “Understanding the Office and Ministry of the Evangelist.” (2017) Revival Thoughts. <http://www.revivalthoughts.org/NewTheEvangelist.htm> (accessed January 7, 2017).
- Peck, Tony. "Episkopé -- A Baptist Perspective." *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 10, no. 3 (May 2010): 5-21, *Religion and Philosophy Collection, EBSCOhost* (accessed January 6, 2017).
- Rice, John R. *The Evangelist*. Sword of the Lord Foundation. Murfreesboro, Tennessee: (1968).