

# Doing the Work of an Evangelist

By Doug Hamilton

## Review of First Two Lessons

Paul charged Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5 to “*do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*” The responsibilities of a preacher are much greater than executing a lesson on a Sunday morning and possibly a Bible class. That is the least of his responsibilities. In review of such, we have covered two areas which are often overlooked. The first was Evangelism and the second was Education. Sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, leading others to the kingdom of God, small-group home Bible studies and personal Bible studies often take up many hours of the week in an active evangelist.

## A Special Note to the Congregation:

I am unaware of any thriving and growing churches of Christ who have decided to go without a preacher in the long-term. Perhaps there is one out there you might personally know of, but the hundreds of congregations for which I am aware have all diminished in the process. I am persuaded this is not for the departing preacher, but of an inactive congregation.

You are an active congregation for which I believe can do the work of an evangelist. The elders believe you can as well. If you are successful, then you will lead many to Christ, mature Christians and be able to pay off the debt. You may never need another full-time preacher again! If however the congregation cannot successfully fulfill the work of an evangelist, then we risk becoming another statistic. Please do not let this happen.

## 3) Encouragement

1 Timothy 4:13, “Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.”

Encouragement is important in every success story for the church. The word *encourage* is an interesting and easy term to understand. It basically means *to put courage in*. When we encourage one another, then we have the courage to make it through from one day to another. If we encourage, then we have the strength to fight the great discourager, the devil, the world and all that is in it. There are many areas that the evangelist can be an encourager.

- a. Nursing Home, Hospital, Shut-in and Prison Visitations.  
2 Timothy 4:9-11, “Make every effort to come to me soon; <sup>10</sup> for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens *has gone* to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup> Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.

Paul was in prison when he wrote these words. It was a very lonely place and many of the brethren who were close to him had abandoned. He did have Luke the physician with him, but he was requesting Timothy and Mark to come visit. Even a strong apostle could use some encouragement from time to time.

Prison is not the only lonely place, but also hospitals, nursing homes and the homes of shut-ins. These are all areas where we find lonely and hurting people. Sometimes it is the job of the evangelist to reach out to the forgotten people of society in order to be effective in evangelism.

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Imagine being a prisoner in a correction facility and receiving no visits. Put yourself in the position of being in a nursing home and having no visits from someone on the outside. Sixty-five percent of residents in a nursing home have that very scenario. How would you feel if you were in the hospital, facing pain and loneliness? Or a shut-in who cannot attend the regular services because of poor health? This is the reality of the world we live in. Any evangelist who does not make regular visits will not be successful ministry and neither will you as a corporate evangelist. People do not care what you know until they know how much you care.

### The Story of Lonely Herb

About five years ago, I met a man in Golden Living Nursing Home. His name was Herbert Stevenson and had no family in the immediate area. He rarely came out of his room and carried a sad countenance on his face. He had no visitors, no friends and no encouragement. He was one of the residents I personally adopted. Though he was an inner city black man and I was a white Midwestern, we got along fine. He told me about his past and his family situation. Mostly I just listened.

I determined to bring in a few more members from the church to assist. One member came in and watched a couple Eagles football games with him on the television. Another member would bring her special recipe of collard greens. Another member of the congregation, Denise Haas, particularly excelled in a friendship with Herbert. It was not long before Herbert's countenance was lifted and he often emerged from his room to attend weekly Bible studies. In fact, I rarely found him in his room. After about a year, I asked Herbert if he was okay with writing something to be read to the congregation. He agreed. The following is what was read.

“I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the love which you have shared with me in my stay in the nursing home. Before you took the time to visit me in Golden Living, I was so lonely. I really didn't think lonely could feel like this. I was forgotten by all the people whom I thought were my friends and family. It hurt so bad that I wanted to just die and get it over with. Then you took me in. I was a stranger to you all, but you loved me like a family member. You will never know how much it means to have you in my life, to have you visit me in the hospital, to remember me for the holidays and to experience the love you gave. From the bottom of my heart I thank you for your Christian service.”

One year after Herbert wrote this, he died poor health. He was buried in the National Cemetery. It was Sister Denise Haas who handled the final arrangements. Herb may have been lonely in the beginning, but at the end he had people he loved and vice-versa. Together we can do the work of an evangelist if we put our minds to it.

I hope that I have lived up to this obligation of my job as an evangelist. In the past fifteen years I have made more than 4,000 hospital, nursing home, shut-in and prison visits to our members, non-members and prisoners. If a personal evangelist ever expects to be effective in his work, he must remember the forgotten people. If a corporate evangelist, you, the congregation, ever expects to be effective, you must do the same.

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With my departure on February 26<sup>th</sup> there will be many openings for you to fill. Here are some of them which I have concern about.

### **Position Open: Visitors for Gene Parsons**

The Camp Hill church of Christ is seeking for men and women to assist make regular nursing home visits to Gene Parsons, the father of Sister Toothman. The candidates must possess a heart of mercy and compassion, a personality of encouragement and service, and a good ear for stories. Must be willing to occasionally go to a diner for pancakes and coffee. If you are interested in this labor of love, please contact Sister Toothman or the elders.

### **Position Open: Visitors for Marcia Peasley**

The Camp Hill church of Christ is seeking for men and women to assist make regular home visits, telephone calls and/or encouraging cards for Sister Marcia Peasley. The candidates must be able to make occasional visits to Harrisburg Hospital when she suffers injury or illness. If you are interested in this labor of love, please contact Charles Brown, Lisa Shaw or the Elders.

### **Position Open: Hospital Visitation Coordinator**

The Camp Hill church of Christ is seeking for men and women to take the lead on the hospital visitation program. You must be available to call in hastened situations and ready to go be with members in emergency rooms, major surgeries, and extended hospital stays. Must be willing to pray with and encourage them in their hour of needs. Must be able to inform the elders if the family requests prayer from the leadership. Occasionally it will involve cases of death within the congregation. If interested, please contact the elders.

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### **Position Open: End of Life Encouragers**

The Camp Hill church of Christ is seeking for men and women to assist in encouraging those who have or are losing members of their family. Must be willing to spend long hours at the hospital, hold the hands of the dying and able to offer follow-up counseling for the bereaved. Also some of the interested candidates might requested to do a funeral service. If you have interest in this ministry, then contact the elders for further details.

### **Position Open: Prison Ministry Volunteers**

The Camp Hill church of Christ is seeking for men and women to assist in prison visits when the need arises. Applicants will need to receive documentation of church representation from the eldership to meet the requirements of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It is important not to be overly gullible and not overly judgmental. Must be able to study the Bible with them and offer the hope of Christ. Interested parties should contact the elders for more information.

#### b. Meals and Service for the Hurting.

- Paul wrote of Timothy in *Philippians 2:22*, “*But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father.*”
- Paul reminded Timothy of Onesiphorus in *2 Timothy 1:18*, “*and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.*”
- He reminded the congregation for which Timothy labored in *Ephesians 6:7*, “*With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men*”.
- *1 Corinthians 16:10-11* informs us that Timothy was making a trip to Corinth on behalf of Paul.
- Timothy was even willingly circumcised for effectivity in the evangelistic efforts (*Acts 16:3*).

The life of Timothy the evangelist was filled sacrificial service. He was willing to be an example of personal sacrifice for the work of an evangelist. There are many sacrifices which people have made over the years at Camp Hill. Two of them which have been prevalent to me is your meals and service ministries, for everyone eats and needs a helping hand at one time or another.

I hope I have done well for you in this area over the last fifteen years. I have personally set up dozens of projects of service, not only for me, but also for the church members. I have always

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found you to be participative. I never thought my work as the evangelist to be above these services because I wanted to be effective with you. Many of you might have needed your snow scooped, your car worked on, your unchurched relative visited, your walls painted, your yard raked, your weeds pulled, your computer repaired, your furniture moved, a meal prepared or delivered, a ride to the hospital, to the doctor, to the airport, to another city and even to another state.

Most of what the evangelist does is for this reason. Most of what you, the corporate evangelist, does should be for the same reason. With that thought there are some other open positions available in my absence.

### **Position Open: Personal Helpers**

The Camp Hill church of Christ is seeking for men and women to assist members and non-members in a multiplicity of menial, including computer, car and home repair, chauffeuring, moving furniture, cleaning, yardwork, etc. Must have a heart for service and willing to break a sweat for the kingdom of God. Interested candidates need to contact the elders and deacons.

### **Position Open: Meals Ministry**

The Camp Hill church of Christ is seeking for men and women to assist preparing and delivering meals for shut-ins, new mothers and the bereaved. The interested candidates must possess skill in meal preparation. Please contact the elders or elder's wives if you have interest.