

THE SCOPE OF EVANGELISTIC PROGRAMS

By Eduardo Duque Madrid

Country of Origin: Mexico

Serving in: Mexico

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Taking into account that reconciliation with God is found in the heart of the Good News of salvation, that the essential qualities of the messengers of the Gospel are loyalty to the Biblical gospel, personal authenticity and love for the unconverted, they should incarnate the Good News that they proclaim. Few things are more rejected by people than hypocrisy, and few things are more attractive than integrity and transparency.

We recognize the necessity to approach with great sensitivity those individuals that hear the Gospel. Many are oppressed for different reasons. But they have already been convicted of their sin and guilt and it will be possible to share with them without delay the good news of salvation if we act tactfully. So, we need to start where the people are with their “felt needs,” and only later, guide them to where they should go, that is to say, to Christ as Savior.

We recognize the Trinitarian foundation for mission. It is the missionary heart of God himself: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If in his heart beats love for a lost world in sin, we should as his people share his heartbeat. The commitment to home mission as well as national, Latin American and world mission in inescapable and indifference to such a commitment is inexcusable.

EVALUATION OF SPECIFIC CASES

Concerning the scope of the evangelistic programs that our church has proposed in Latin America, I will mention those that I have known:

Mexico 1987

Under the general denominational “Thrust to the Cities” program, Mexico City was targeted during 1987, with aggressive evangelistic work with the goal of establishing 100 new churches in one year. It began with the premise that in the first 80 years of the church’s presence in the Federal District, around 15 churches and missions had been established. The population of 20 million inhabitants represented an evangelistic challenge for our church.

A great deal of money was invested in portable sound systems, Bibles, publicity, evangelistic materials and in foreign personnel brought in to prepare national leadership.

Two things were not taken into account:

1. Some of the churches that appeared in the statistical reports were in reality missions or had a membership so small that they were just “surviving”.
2. The program was not fully accepted by the national leadership, and some pastors not only did not participate, but openly opposed the program. It was started with a very high goal that was

Evangelistic programs (Eduardo Duque)

not “owned” by the people. At times the national church is not given the seed of the gospel, but the plant of a program with everything including the pot, in the hope that it will grow.

Plan Impacto

Based on prayer cells, small group work and weekly meetings in homes, it had its start in South America, reaching notable numerical growth in membership and organization of churches.

Doctors Bustle and Radi, referring to the Impacto Plan, said: “We are using a plan that not only will grow the mother church, but will allow it to start new congregations to build the kingdom of God. In place of just establishing our goals to have a church that maintains an acceptable rate of growth, our goal is a healthy church that grows, that extends itself to plant new churches”.¹

The same book said that the study of the growth of several churches in various denominations showed that “...the growth in the number of churches is a significant factor in the growth of the denomination”.² Dr. Paul Orjala writes: “The church in South America owes its success in its rapid growth more to the accelerated way of planting churches than any other factor... As we plant more churches, we will have a dramatic increase in our growth.”³

This plan was adopted by the MAC Region and although it was not totally accepted, it served to give a push to numerical growth and the organization of new churches.

The “Achilles heel” of the Impact Plan is conserving the results, that is to say discipleship and the organization of churches with few members. Currently work is done in the development of a systematic plan of gradual, continual discipleship, but that has not yet reached the local churches.

The Jesus Film

The greatest virtue of projecting the “Jesus” film in its 35 millimeter version has been its acceptance in rural areas. In urban areas, the VHS format has been used with family groups and with children.

Possibly, because of the fact that there are many versions of the story of Jesus, including the most recent one produced by Mel Gibson, and that they are common in cinemas in some of the countries in Latin America, this method of evangelism has not been very attractive.

Evangelistic cube

Based on personal evangelism, and although it is not well known in the local churches, this method has served to mobilize the church to leave its four walls and look for the

¹ Louie Bustle y Bruno Radi, *Un sistema de movimiento: Un modelo de evangelismo agresivo* (Nashville, Tenn.: Choice Books, 1992), 95.

² George G Hunter, *To Spread the Power: Growth in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 111.

³ Paul Orjala, *Get Ready to Grow: Principles of Church Growth* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1978), 102, 105.

Evangelistic programs (Eduardo Duque)

unconverted to share the Good News with them. It requires workshops to teach how to use it and to acquire the skill to use this new tool.

“Ser como Él” (To Be Like Him)

More than an evangelistic program promoted by the MAC Region, I consider that this is a good plan of spiritual formation that at the same time makes every Nazarene believer share the good news of salvation with others. The seven disciplines mentioned, with the exception of “promotion”, are all based on the model of Jesus Christ.

Since it is fairly recent, I think its use has not extended enough as part of an evangelistic program, per se. It is difficult to evaluate the results of a program that is not well known on the districts and local churches.

Development of ministries

Taking as the example the Church of the Nazarene in Campinas, Brazil, which has developed around 30 different ministries that fundamentally serve the community, this is a program that looks to reach the unconverted for Christ.

If we join the development of ministries to working in small group Bible studies, I think it could result in a good evangelistic plan.

CONCLUSION WITH PROPOSALS AND REFLECTIONS

I consider that every evangelistic program must follow the principles of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, based on Matthew 9:35-38.

First, it must be *a global evangelistic program*. That is to say, one that ministers in cities and in villages or rural areas. It needs to be inclusive, reaching men and women in large urban areas and in small towns. The needs of men and women in great metropolis are different than those of the rural areas and so urban evangelistic ministries will be different than those in the rural areas. Strategies will change, although the Biblical principles are the same because spiritual needs do not change.

Second, that it develop *a holistic ministry*, as Jesus who cared for the mind with teaching, the heart and the spirit with preaching and the body, with physical needs of the human with healing. Only for study motives we analyze the human being as if he or she were dichotomous or trichotomous, but to care for his or her fundamental needs programs must seek to minister integrally.

Third, that it be an evangelistic program *that recuperates the social aspect of the Gospel*, by means of compassionate ministries, ministries of mercy. That through the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ we can see the multitudes “as sheep without a shepherd”, ministering to their physical, material, social, emotional, and human rights needs.

Some statistic are overwhelming and alarming; approximately 800 million people, or a fifth of the world’s population, are in this misery, unable to satisfy basic needs for survival, and

Evangelistic programs (Eduardo Duque)

thousands die each day of hunger. Millions more do not have covering or adequate clothing; they live without clean water or healthcare of any kind. They are condemned to live a miserable existence without the possibility of bettering themselves, or their families. In Mexico alone there are 3.5 million children who work and are at risk of falling into prostitution.⁴ All of these problems have their root in the sin of humanity, and demand from God's people a radical response of compassion.

And fourth, in agreement with Luke 4:43, that we look for *extensive evangelistic programs*; those that try to avoid centralism, that "give light" to other new churches, that develop multicultural ministries and do not forget ethnic groups or the marginalized. Extensive must include other towns, states, countries, cultural groups, to organize new congregations.

Taking into account Biblical principles and the fundamental characteristics of the evangelistic ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, the strategies that we use will have as a result spiritual and numerical growth in our congregations; a faithful fulfillment of the Great Commission.

May God let us see the world with tears in our eyes, with love in our hearts, and with the Good News of salvation on our lips.

⁴ Javier Alatorre. Noticiero Hechos en Televisión Azteca. México, Mayo de 2004.